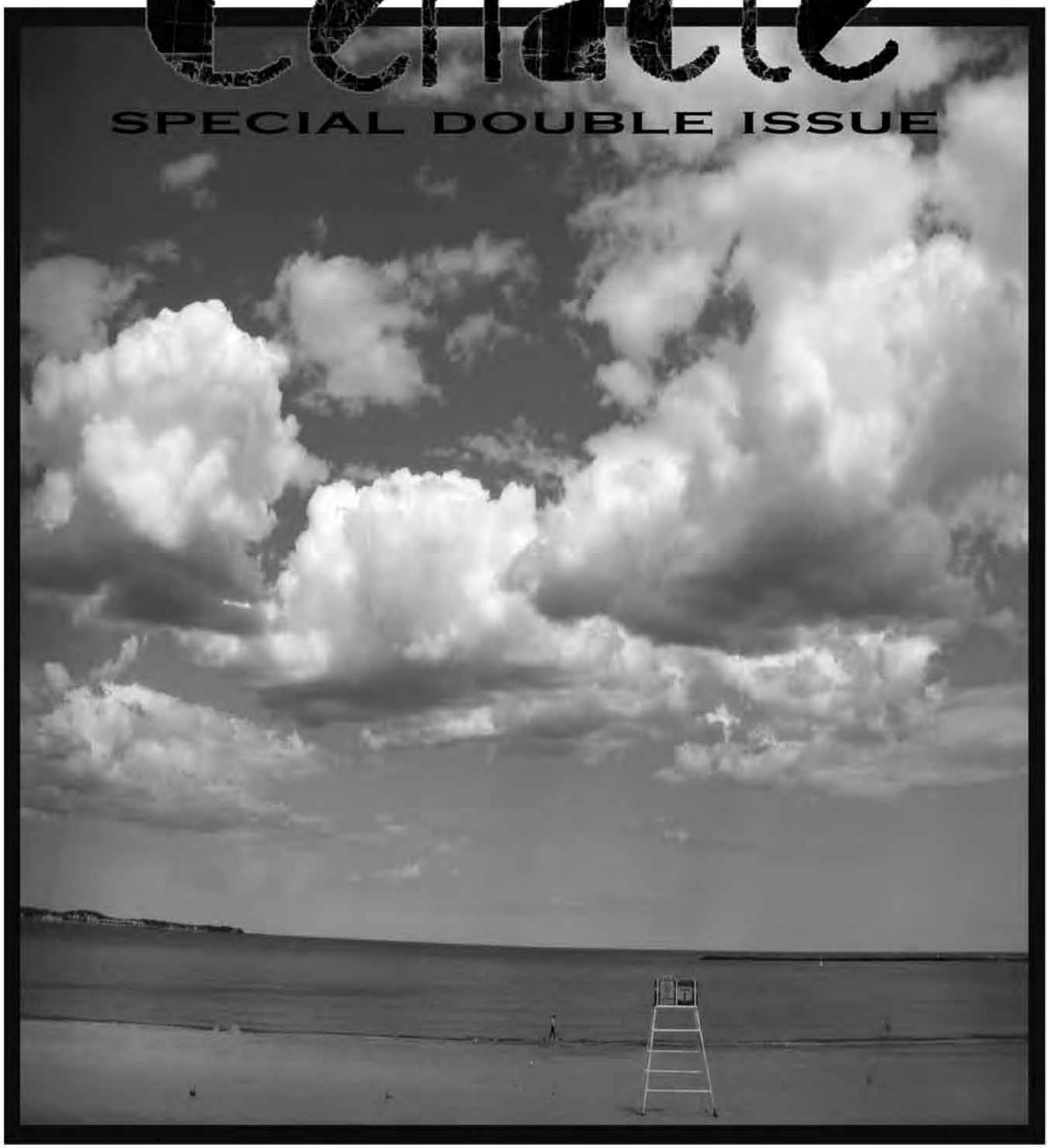
The Cenacle

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE



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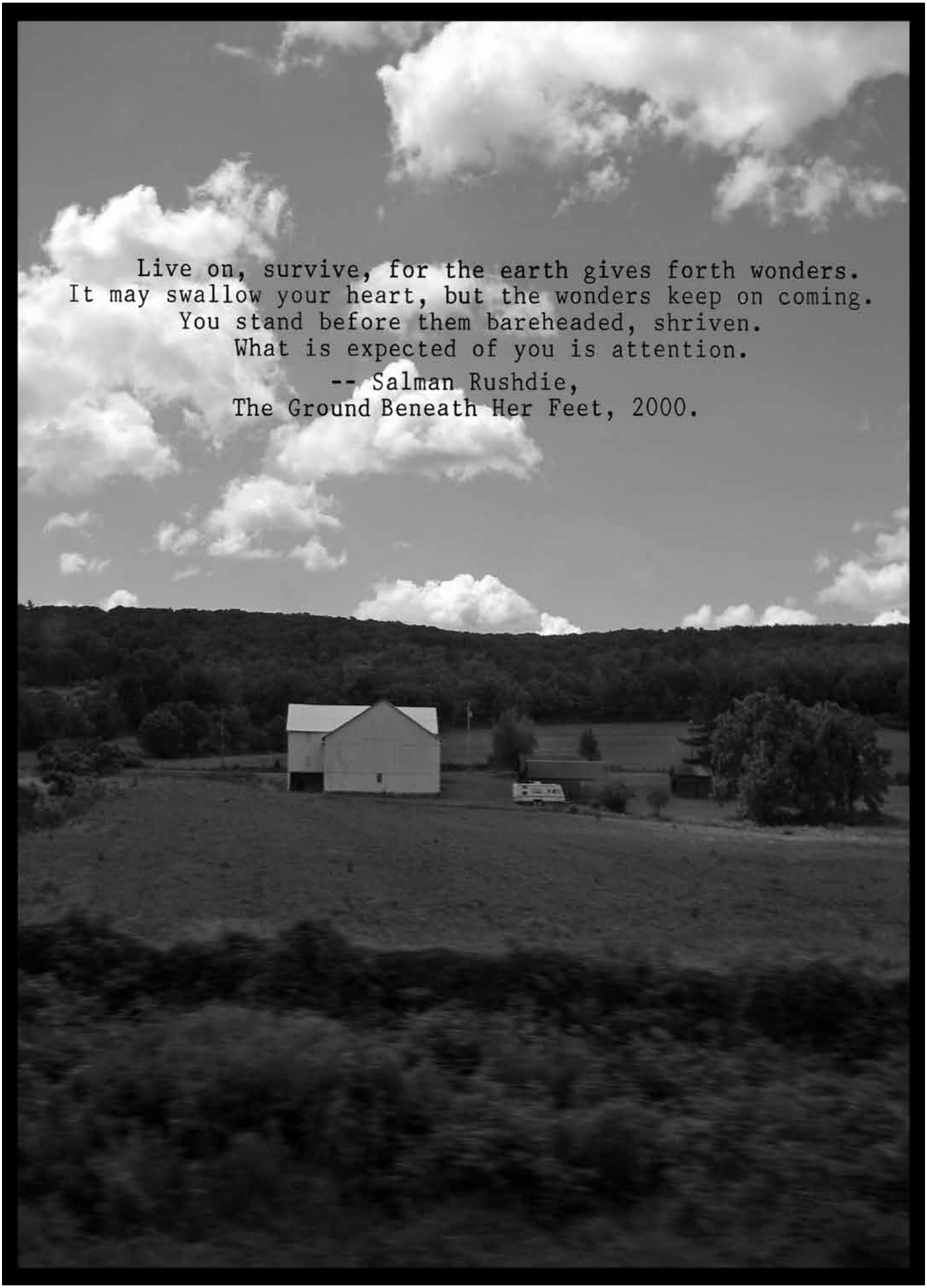
Live on, survive, for the earth gives forth wonders.
It may swallow your heart, but the wonders keep on coming.
You stand before them bareheaded, shriven.
What is expected of you is attention.
-- Salman Rushdie,
The Ground Beneath Her Feet, 2000.

June 18, 2010
11:44 a.m.
Peoples Donutshop
New Britain, Connecticut

Where to start, & how to continue. One thought runs my mind over & over lately: how miraculous the human brain, millions of years in the making to what it is now, what countless things it can craft & create, how it can re-invent & re-invent & re-invent on the individual, societal, & global scales, microcosm to macrocosm. How it can praise the world in touch & Art & emulation.

And then so much waste. Needless waste. Ugly, abominable, brutal waste. Tonight, walk out your door, & look up to whatever stars you can see. The heavens above gaze equally on these heavens below. It's that simple. No part of this creation is greater or lesser for men's absence or presence.

That said, the beauty & the waste men have wrought on this world cannot be considered as equal. When we damage or destroy aspects of the world, or each other, this matters, this changes all

a little bit. Everything matters. A corollary I carry with me is: nothing goes away, nothing returns.

So what then. Where application of such thoughts? That's what I often wonder, what I've sat here all morning & wondered over. I used to live near this donut shop, a 15-minute walk maybe, in this run-down factory town where I spent years as an English major at the local state university. I'd come to this joint, & write, like now. There wasn't much else, a couple of fast-food places, the library, wherever I lived at the time. Summers I came here for the air conditioning. For the view, beyond this plaza's parking lot, of the lots of trees & weeds, & the vast sky uncut by tall buildings.

Come here & listen to the old men gather & grouse about their off-track betting escapades. The poor, the retarded, the mothers with children, the local workers. I got friends to come here for literary meetings. Alone, my pens & note-books & music & I would push many late hours.

Been years since then, since I lived many hours here throughout my working weeks. Memories of a pretty girlfriend coming through that doorway to meet me, of rainstorms & sunsets I'd watch, are old & old.

Did it, does it matter? Or, to sharpen my thought, how do I make this visit matter today, years between last & next?

Well, from a whim jump into this piece for The Cenacle & see if it goes. Remember, intensely, the one of here. Then the leap—

What I wonder & fear today, sitting here, is that most people never approach their potential. Programmed young for perception & belief, trained to a set of values, range of behaviors, defined & limited palette of life's possibilities & probabilities, they accede the unknown mysteries of their beings with a scant few moments spent witnessing these mysteries.

There are no rich folk in here; hence my nickname for it. Everyone

passing through counts his change. Many of their hours are not their own, never have been, never will be. The years will pass without explanation — with drama, with event, with pain & pleasure — but without explanation. Subjective experience atwist with cultural prejudice will ~~stat~~ stand shadowing its absence.

But what of this? What relation is truth to trees? To mockingbirds or passing cloud? In truth, I don't know, but I do see how claims to truth, the fiercer & more exclusive, they argue to be, are the very ones to raise armies to war & stakes to burn identified opponents.

What I do not believe is that most of those in positions of human power have any real empathy for those passing in & out of here today. The individuals I see here are, for those in power, the masses, the breeders, the tax base. Ignorant, manipulable, driven by fear & prejudice, by trinket novelty, lure of gossip, frenzied yet inhibited sex drives, dreams little examined much less heeded.

I know enough to see all this, how power drives & shapes & possesses incessantly, & with rare plain visibility. But my temperament does not call for revolution, does not believe it would make things better. Humans don't just raise dogs & cats to a benign captivity; we raise each other to one.

We interdepend on a scale so close to global that dramatic shifts are rarely for the better; we more likely see them come in the form of military attacks, natural disasters, manmade environmental catastrophes, economic collapses.

What the past decade has strongly indicated to me is that things can get worse more quickly & more easily than they can get better. Worse, humans seem to have a strikingly limited patience for incremental change. We need to clean up the vast mess we are making of this heaven we live in, but there's something bloody & loud on TV, a nice set of tits & ass shaking it, a catchy song on the radio, a toilet shaped like a kitten on The Internet.

I don't know where these thoughts arrive, or their use to anyone save to confirm what some others think. I think that the values I would hold fast to relate to attention & to communication.

Changing the self or the self's world in any meaningful way intimately involves one's attention to an identified set of facts, & the ability to "talk through" — with one's thoughts & one's hands, as well as one's words — to an altered state.

And I would echo in variation, what I wrote earlier: change changes all. Where I pull out of my worst freefalls of pessimism is to recall this thought to myself, couple it again & again to a stubborn persistence, & choose to believe, consciously call it a faith, that the world's potentials are far deeper & vaster & stranger than humankind collectively knows. We know neither beginning nor end, ceiling nor floor, nor dimension, of what world, what creation we play through. Everything is possible, & awaits, each & every one of us. Now, tonight, tomorrow, hereon in perpetuity. 6-18-2010

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Thanks foremost to Victor Vanek who smilingly drove us 3000 miles across the U.S. this summer to our new abode in Massachusetts. Thanks to KD's new employer for bringing her aboard. And a word of gratefulness to Amante, Ciccone, Burke, & expected others for welcoming us back. Happy that Boston is still here, & still breathes & beats with potential . . .

Alex Smith

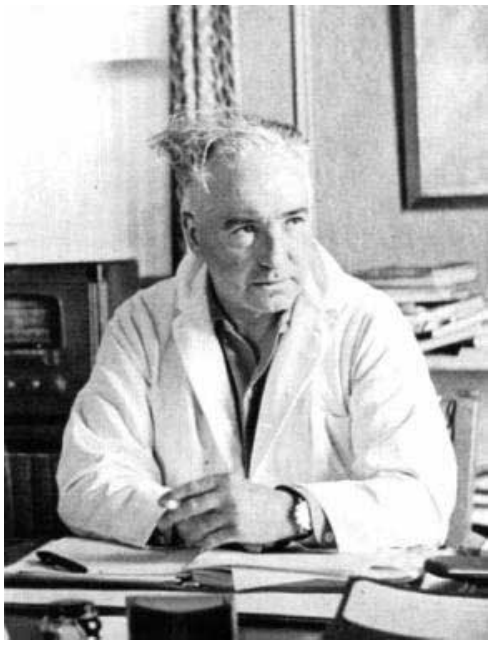
Wilhelm Reich: Life and Death of a Social Pioneer

[Essay]

I.

What is life like for a person always ahead of his time? Always thinking more freely, living on the edge, like Wilhelm Reich? Was he a social profit or a conman? Why did the American authorities hound this well-known author, social investigator, and scientist? Why did he die in prison? Reich was a pioneer in almost everything. Some say he was an early environmentalist as well.

Wilhelm Reich was born in 1897, the oldest son of a wealthy, almost feudal Jewish landholder in the last days of the Austrian-Hungarian empire. Reich's relationship with his parents seemed to have driven him to investigate the secrets of the mind. His mother committed suicide after the twelve-year-old Reich told his patriarchal father of her infidelity with the boy's tutor. His father became suicidal as well, and died of pneumonia and tuberculosis only a few years later. These are scars that twist even a brilliant man. His next teacher was World War I. The young Austrian served on the Italian front as Austria's four hundred year empire crumpled.



Wilhelm Reich

Reich studied medicine in Vienna. In the stomping grounds of Sigmund Freud, Reich picked up the fever for self-examination. He began to practice psychoanalysis while still a student, and wrote papers on the importance of early sexuality that were approved by Freud himself. Quick in his mind and his expression, Reich became an active leader in the psychoanalytic movement of the 1920s. After a few years, though, Reich became frustrated with the limited possibilities for social change using the one-by-one approach of psychoanalysis. He felt he was always bandaging wounds and never stopping the war.

Enjoying his own sex life, Reich concluded that ability to have a complete, heterosexual orgasm was necessary to experience peace of mind. Otherwise, in a frustrated sexual state, the person builds up a system of protective muscular and emotional tension which Reich dubbed body-armor. Thirty years ahead of his time, Wilhelm Reich championed a sexual revolution.

He concluded that only a campaign of sexual liberation could fundamentally change society. To this end, he founded a team of physicians, social workers, and volunteers of both sexes. They traveled around Vienna in a van to pass out sexual education pamphlets, to arrange abortions for women who wanted them, to provide birth control, and to offer sexual counseling for teens. These were explosive activities in the middle of Old Europe. All these things were revolutionary and generally illegal in Catholic Vienna of the 1920s. Reich even advocated pre-marital or extra-marital sex.

In the late 1920s, Reich attempted to merge his commitment to social change with sexual liberation (what he called sexual politics or sexpol for short) and also to the larger ideas of Marxism. In 1930, he moved from Vienna to Berlin where there was a large Marxist movement struggling with the far right of the National Socialist party. In the same year, Reich was expelled from the Austrian Social Democratic Party and suspended from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. There was a rush to kick him out even from the most liberal institutions in Austrian society.

During his period in Berlin, Reich attracted as students a number of Americans who later became famous psychoanalysts. By 1933, the German Communist Party, wanting not to alienate the large Catholic vote, expelled Wilhelm Reich. But the Communists were already doomed. The heavily Catholic southern Germany, especially Bavaria, voted by the millions for the nemesis of all Communists in Germany, Adolf Hitler. Most of the party was led away to be worked to death.

But the expulsion and pressure may have saved Reich's life. He emigrated to spend time in Scandinavia, mainly staying in Norway. His reputation for sexual freedom—helping women and pushing sex education—followed him. In 1934 the International Psychoanalytic Association likewise expelled Wilhelm Reich. In 1939, following disputes in Norway, Reich emigrated to America where he established the Orgone Institute in Rangeley Maine. Reich continued to research and write not only about psychoanalysis, or even psychology, but on a broad range of the physical sciences, including biology and nuclear physics.

In the early 1950s, Reich was among the few voices criticizing atomic testing in the atmosphere. He said there was a serious environmental risk from airborne radiation. Only a few years later, Strontium-90 was discovered in milk supplies and bones of children in the northern hemisphere. Reich believed that life itself either was energy or used a special kind of energy. Delving into the submicroscopic world, he claimed he had isolated a new kind of particle. This was, he said, related to the life force that he called orgone energy. Reich eventually built a special kind of box that would accumulate orgone. He offered a kind of vitality treatment and sold his orgone accumulators.

Orgone Institute

Writing in the journal *Biophysical Functionalism and Mechanistic Natural Science* for 1942,

Reich said, "We do not intend to wait until, fifty or a hundred years from now, the existence of the orgone may finally be conceded. It is up to us, and not to any so-called 'authority,' to see that the existence of the biological energy is recognized."

II.

In the 1920s, Reich focused on the orgasm as the height, as the bodily release of consciousness. Myron Sharaf describes this best in *Fury on Earth: A Biography of Wilhelm Reich* (1983): "With Reich's description of orgastic potency, we enter the specific Reichian domain. The very silence of this world, a world of slow, frictional movement, of lapse of consciousness, of involuntary contractions, sets it apart from the usual analytic concern with verbalization and cognitive mastery of the emotive and irrational."

Indeed, there is irony in the fact that Reich chose as his criterion of mental health the individual's capacity to go beyond mental phenomenon. To have no thought, no consciousness even, but to surrender completely to the involuntary, to the sensations of pleasure. In this emphasis on the wordless, the ineffable, Reich revealed himself as grappling more with the truths of certain philosophers and poets than those pursued by his fellow psychoanalysts. Friedrich Nietzsche had written, "All the regulations of mankind are tuned to the end that the intense sensation of life is lost in continual distractions." Ludwig Wittgenstein asserted that the "most important matters of life were essentially not discussable; they were beyond words."

If some social activists tune out when they hear about orgasms and sex freedom, their ears return for the subject of mass psychology. We know that advertising has managed to drive people into consumerism using only the mind. Is there a mental doorway where social justice and environmentalism can enter? How do corporations and the state use mass psychology? Wilhelm Reich pioneered this field. While still an accepted prodigy of Sigmund Freud, he was among the first to transfer the ideas of individual psychoanalysis to society as a whole. His seminal 1933 book, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, is important to read, especially now as industrial fascism threatens to take over a naive public.

In the late spring of 1927, Reich had just returned from a rest cure in Davos, Switzerland, likely for tuberculosis which was sweeping eastern Europe. TB killed his brother. On July 15, 1927, one of his patients informed him that the workers of Vienna were demonstrating in the streets. Reich and his wife Annie went out to join them, as he reported in his later work, *People in Trouble.* The crowds burned the Vienna courthouse as a protest against injustice, following which the police fired into the crowd, which included Reich and his wife Annie. After three hours of shooting, there were over a thousand wounded and eighty-nine dead. It was the worst outbreak since the 1848 Revolution, and Reich was there to witness how institutional power caused a slaughter. Reporting on these events, Reich used a new style of journalism that included his own reactions, a type of journalism that reappeared (as The New Journalism) with the 1960s and '70s mass protests in Europe and the United States.

Reich's experience of social violence brought about a change in his writing and research. Moving away from the analysis of individuals to the causes of social conservatism and control, Reich became involved with the leftist Austrian Social Democrats and the Communists, trying to bring his solution of sexual liberation to both movements. Both eventually refused to include sexual politics in their platform. This was part of a wider movement stressing sexuality as a fundamental social problem. The World League for Sexual Reform, for example, was

meeting in 1930. Wilhelm Reich was a keynote speaker. Tired of trying to cure people's mental unhappiness and neuroses in what he considered a sick society, Reich said society could improve mental health by social measures just as it had improved physical health with sanitation. Society, Reich said, should ensure housing and food for its poorest members. Women needed safe access to abortion, and both men and women needed contraceptives and sex education to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

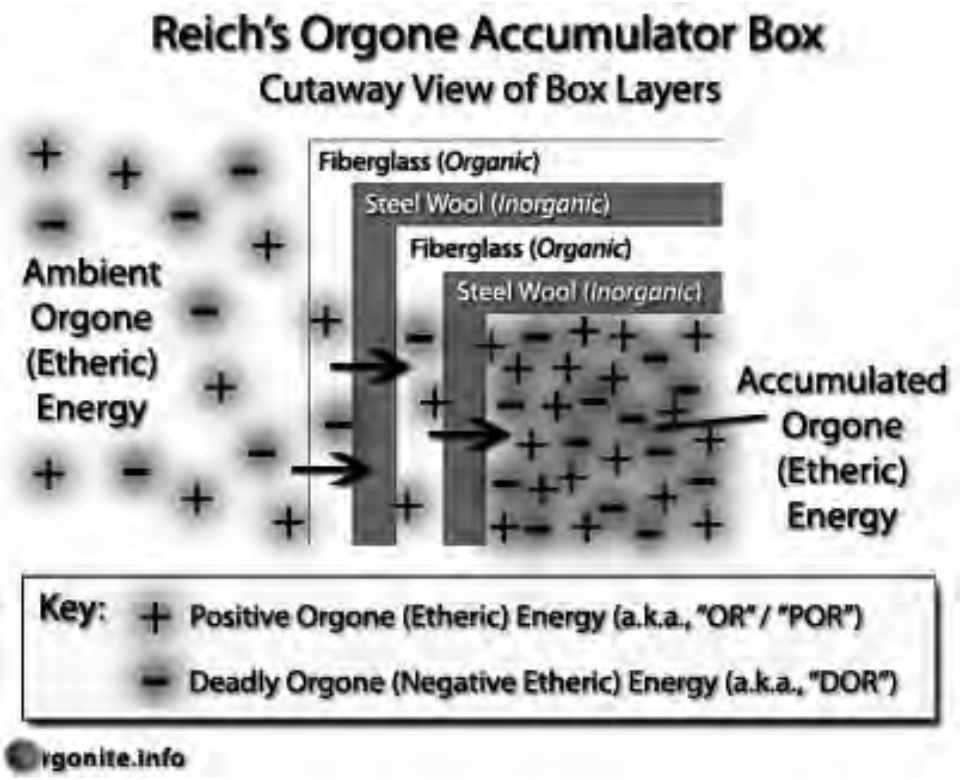
To help people have less damaging lives, Reich proposed major changes to the laws governing marriage and divorce, the very kind of laws now in place and taken for granted. He thought individual neuroses would still continue to occur, partly due to social mal-adaptation to the natural realities of sexuality. Following Freud, he believed character and character problems developed early from toddlerhood to children aged up to six. He asked disquieting questions about children's sexual impulses. These exist everywhere but are denied by everyone. Masturbation, for one example, was still punished in most households.

In his 1933 book, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Reich expounded his major theories. Repressed and denied sexual urges made people afraid and pliable to power. The social machinery to frustrate sex energy hardened in the muscles of the body so that people became stiff in character, in their emotions, and in their way of moving. Life energy was used up in enforcing the unenforceable, leaving people tired and politically apathetic. Lies about love enabled lies about power and wealth. But people who could tap into their sexual energy would wake up and care about their society as well. Sharaf comments, "As the women's movement in the United States was to emphasize many years later, it was necessary to begin with the personal, to politicize the personal. The political right, especially Nazism, was well aware of this. Its leaders constantly used sex propaganda, but of a negative kind. They played on people's fear of their own impulses and their fear of chaos. By calling upon the need for moralistic defenses, for law and order, for protection against the Bolshevik menace, to the family."

Reich believed that adults used sexual repression to create authority, and to make children ready for domination. He argued that this process was carried on through the educational system until they fear their inner selves but trust the worst political rats. They can't revolt or question authority because of their awful inner fears which may begin with early sexuality. This same pattern of domination has been used down through the ages. In *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Reich said, "Suppression of the natural sexuality in the child, particularly of its genital sexuality, makes the child apprehensive, shy, obedient, afraid of authority, good and adjusted in the authoritarian sense. It paralyzes the rebellious forces because any rebellion is laden with anxiety. It produces, by inhibiting sexual curiosity and sexual thinking in the child, a general inhibition of thinking and critical faculties. In brief, the goal of sexual suppression is that of producing an individual who is adjusted to the authoritarian order and who will submit to it in spite of all misery and degradation." Sharaf concludes, "Today from the efforts of such social analysts as Eric Fromm, Theodor Adorno, and Richard Hofstadter we have become very familiar with the notion that to understand political movements one must grasp the psychological structure of the people connected with them. But when Reich wrote *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* in 1933, almost ten years before Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*, almost twenty years before *The Authoritarian Personality*, his ideas were exceedingly original."

There are some truths about ourselves we refuse to know as a society. The mechanism of repressing truth may begin with our own denial of childhood sexuality. Once repression is learned, it can spread to exclude other truths, including our mass desire for death, our suicidal

weapons of mass destruction, our killing of nature. We must adapt to the truth of our lifestyles and the global situation because human lies always collapse sooner or later. We cannot continue to suppress obvious biological truths in nature. Later, Reich was to see such social neuroses as a form of emotional plague. The emotional plague opens us up to all sorts of madness.



Orgone Accumulator Box

III.

In Norway, and in America after 1939, Reich was trying to discover the physics of life itself. He called it *orgone*, which contains both the idea of organism but also orgasm, which Reich regarded as a necessary penultimate consciousness. Claiming to have discovered this life energy, Reich corresponded with governmental and scientific authorities, including Einstein, about his scientific theories. Meanwhile, he was pilloried by widespread reprinting of an essay in *The New Republic* called "The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich." Written by Mildred Edie Brady, it was a sort of *Reader's Digest* piece. As part of a conspiracy of discreditation, Brady's piece was republished as though it were official science in the *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic* #12.

The tragic thing about Reich, aside from being martyred in so many countries for his pioneering views on sexuality and the individual, was that he was jailed, where he died in 1957, for attempting to introduce the study of life energy. He sought to penetrate the force that appears to drive the wondrous varieties of life on this planet instead of settling for a mechanical description of life—even if Reich's science was faulty—even if a lifetime of trying to help an insane society had disturbed his own sanity. The atomic society around him, the people of M.A.D. (Mutual Assured Destruction), very badly needed a new idea, even if it was a myth of

life, not death. Reich's tale is a cautionary one for the great searcher of truth—how risky it is to stray too far from the social mind when trying to understand the mass psychosis of the times.

In 1954 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) got a legal judgment against Reich. They claimed his orgone accumulators were a type of medical fraud. A judge ordered all accumulators, and all literature associated with them, to be destroyed. The FDA interpreted this to mean that *all* of Reich's writings should either be destroyed or edited out, presumably by hand, to remove *any* mention of the idea of orgone energy. These violations of civil liberties and basic human rights were praised by the psychiatric and psychoanalytic associations of the day. Reich responded by threatening to change the weather, to flood parts of Maine. He had been experimenting with electronic devices to alter conduction in the atmosphere, perhaps a precursor to the infamous HAARP (High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program) program run by the US government in Alaska.

On June 26, 1956, FDA agents burned Wilhelm Reich's research library, his journals, his books, his letters. On August 23, 1956 federal agents forced the burning of another six tons of Reich's literature. The pile included—oh irony of ironies—hardcover copies of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. Few protested this treatment of the famous author and physician. Ralph Nader sponsored James S. Turner's investigation into the FDA's case against Reich in 1970. There was also a 1974 study by Jerome Greenfield (*Wilhelm Reich Vs. The USA*) about the weird FDA data against Reich. People repressed Reich, along with their own fears of talk about sexuality. Authority won.

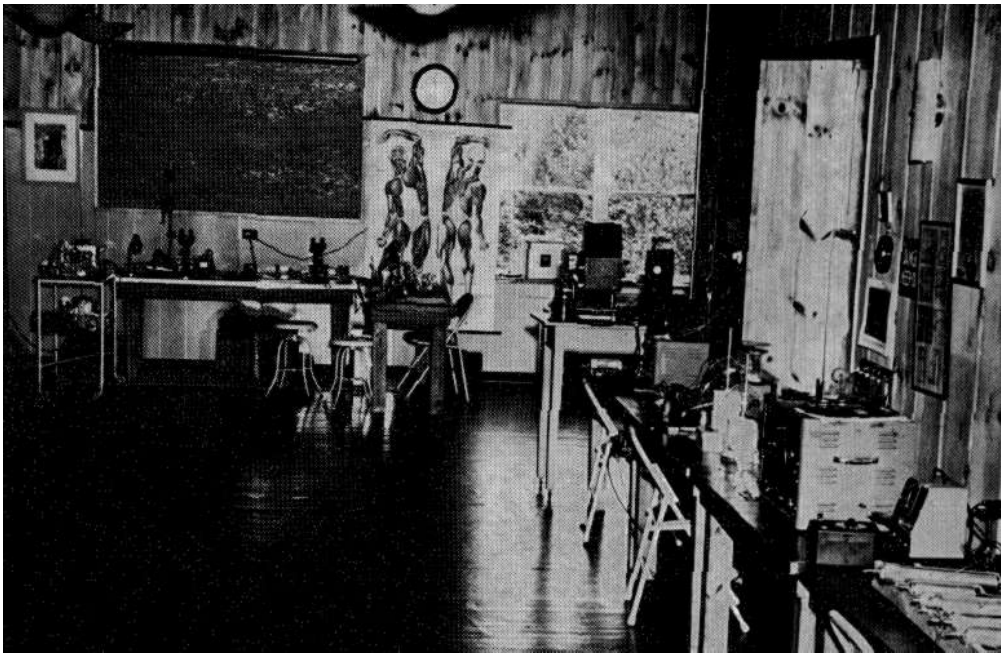
Any social activist needs to consider these risks of violence, of public and authoritarian reaction even to life-generating instincts. Wilhelm Reich's vision of life energy was made illegal by the US government. He was forbidden to research or write about it. Was Reich attempting to found a new paradigm? A life-saving myth, marked by his own martyrdom? And what if we accept Reich's theory of life energy? He was not the first to seek such a thing. Physics had already discovered a new energy in radiation when, in 1903, eminent French physics professor Prosper-René Blondlot announced the existence of N-rays, a dim form of light which he thought emanated from living things and perhaps from the mind. N-rays may have represented psychic energy. They were later found not to exist.

What if we accepted Reich's myth that there is an energy, that it can be accumulated, that it is hurt by pollution and radiation, that it resides inside the armored core of each of us? This life energy is everywhere. It appears on craggy, frozen cliffs and in the deepest sea bottom. Life pops up in the scientist's sealed laboratory dish, arriving from the air. Life is as likely to colonize machines as vice versa. It cracks open the heaviest stone monuments and eats away the strongest steel. Life adapts to ice or lava. Does anyone who proposes or worships such life energy trigger the mechanisms of defensive authority or the death instinct of the masses? Who can speak for life energy, for orgone if you will, without being denied and reviled?

IV.

In the aftermath of Hiroshima and during the atmospheric atomic testing in America in the early 1950s Wilhelm Reich was one of the first to worry publicly about the effects of radiation and the deterioration of the atmosphere generally from pollution. At the time, he was somewhat desperately trying to find scientific proof of orgone energy. He hoped an understanding of orgone could counteract the obvious death wish of the Cold War society.

All the while, Reich had to fight a kind of double conspiracy by the FDA, apparently acting on behalf of the mind doctors—psychiatrists and psychologists—and by the FBI under the sexually perverted J. Edgar Hoover. Repressing his own homosexuality and crossdressing while



Wilhelm Reich's Laboratory

persecuting others for the same, Hoover pursued Reich as a former Communist supporter in Europe in the 1920s and '30s. Sharaf discusses Reich's investigation into the impact of radiation on living things, a project called the Oranur Experiment: "Today atomic tests, nuclear wastes, and harmful x-rays can produce public outrage, but such was not the case in 1951. Within weeks of the Oranur Experiment Reich was concerned about the effects of all kinds of toxic influences, chemical offal, electromagnetic pollution on atmospheric and organismic orgone energy. I recall thinking, back in 1951, that his concern with minute traces of radium on watch dials and TV emissions was excessive, if not insane. Today, the use of radium in watches is rapidly declining, effects of flourescent lights have been noted, and people are advised not to sit too close to TV sets. He became concerned not only with the dangers of nuclear radiation, but also with chemical pollution and the danger from non-nuclear forms of electro-magnetic emissions. The latter two, he noted, could, in sufficient doses, irritate orgone energy in a noxious way. Since the 1960s, the classical theory of radiation sickness has grown more similar to Reich's in its recognition that relatively low levels of nuclear radiation and non-nuclear emissions—for example, from microwaves—can have harmful cumulative results."[1]

Human-made atmospheric pollution, where life creates conditions hostile to itself, Reich called DOR, short for Deadly Orgone Energy. By 1953, he wondered if the DOR energy was left by aliens, perhaps even a kind of exhaust from their vehicles? Sharaf comments: "Reich describes the emotional flavor, his words, of DOR clouds in a manner reminiscent of the nineteenth-century art critic John Ruskin. Indeed the comparison goes further, since Ruskin

[1] It is known that life forms move through the lower atmosphere. If we lay out food, for example, something arrives via the air to grow there (perhaps a fungus). Reich also raised the issue of the effect of pollution and atomic radiation on such airborne and invisible parts of our eco-system, rather than just directly on ourselves as human organisms. This subject is still understudied, even today.

was, to my knowledge, the first writer to comment on the atmospheric effects of intensive coal usage in England in the 1880s."

Reich attempted to devise a mechanism to divert such harmful clouds or to cause rain. He invented a system of tubes and electricity that was tried out with some reports of success in both New England and the American Southwest. Frustrated with the deadly atomic game between the West and Russia, in his letters from prison in 1956, Reich pleaded for sanctuaries for life.

Further research regarding Reich's suspicious death in jail is contained in the essay "Who Killed Wilhelm Reich?" by Jim Martin.[2] Martin writes: "In my view, Wilhelm Reich was in prison because he stumbled onto frightening facts about nuclear radiation during the early 1950s, a critical point in that newly developed industry." Simply put, Reich found that there is no shielding possible against the biological effects of nuclear radiation. On January 5, 1951 in what was called the Oranur Experiment, Reich placed a minute sample (1 milligram) of radium inside the orgone accumulator. Reich's shocking report, which can be found in the *Selected Writings*, details how radiation sickness is a function of the organism's response to the invasive insult and not a direct result of the radiation poisoning itself. Thus different people may be more susceptible to the very minute doses while others may feel no noticeable effects. Each person's reaction is different according to their own emotional and biological structure. And this may explain why some people react to radiation even in minute doses more than others do. As the original book may be hard to find, we reproduce his important argument here: "It will be recalled that there was little understanding of the biological effects of radiation in the 1950s. Many people remember that soldiers were sent directly into test sites shortly after the dust cleared from nuclear explosions. They wore no protection and were merely dusted off afterwards. At this writing (January 1994) the US Department of Energy has released many documents about the true nature of America's nuclear heritage. DOE Secretary Hazel O'Leary has offered full disclosure about the years of chronic abuse of an unwitting population of human guinea pigs by the scientific establishment and the military. So far, reports have focused to the more insane injection of human beings with plutonium without informed consent. Less has been reported about the facts that first came out, that throughout the 1940s and 1950s the military dropped radioactive dust over vast areas of the Western states. To put this into perspective, the military essentially turned each of us into a cohort of experimental subjects in an ongoing test of the biological effects of radiation poisoning. There is little public understanding today of the true nature of Reich's research. However, the military, as of 1948, was fully apprised of his findings.

Cloudbuster

[2] This essay is part of a fascinating collection of underground and cult classics in the book *Apocalypse Culture*, published in 1990 and updated in 1994. The book bills itself as part of the literature of *catastrophism*.

Indeed, the AEC (the Atomic Energy Commission) provided Reich with the radium samples he used in the Oranur Experiment."

Reich further came to the attention of authorities when he corresponded with, and then met with, Albert Einstein. Reich had discovered and attempted to communicate the fact that even low levels of radiation can harm living things. At the time, the government was secretly using the American population to test for radiation effects. The Soviet government under Joseph Stalin was likewise involved in an all-out atomic development without any regard for the health of its own citizens or the long-term environment. By researching radiation sickness, Reich had stumbled into this nuclear inter-relationship, both hostile and friendly. He

Wilhelm Reich Arrested, 1957.

was crushed by what he perceived as an orchestrated attack by the press, official organizations, and bureaucracy. The emerging record, such as it is, appears to support Reich's general thesis of a conspiracy to silence him. Jim Martin reports, "Venom was stirred up by Michael Straight and *The New Republic*, under the editorship of the pro-Stalinist presidential candidate Henry Wallace. A reporter interviewed Reich under false pretenses and finally wrote about Reich's sex cult. This brought the crisis to a head. The FDA launched a multi-million dollar investigation of the orgone accumulator, declared it a fraud, and set about bringing criminal proceedings against Reich. Reich's FBI files reveal a blistering blizzard of letters directed towards getting rid of Reich from doctors in the AMA, ministers of Christian youth crusades, and one from the Atomic Energy Commission advising the FDA what a 'thorn in the side' Reich had been."

All this storm of death-making and evil descended on the Maine house of one Wilhelm Reich in 1957. They hauled him away, burned his books and letters, and left him to die with thieves and murderers in Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary.

Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor

The Day in Four Parts

I

Like pushing back strands of hair,
The oars push away
Stray thoughts of the day before—
Tender grasp of new sultry air,
Sudden gasp of summer,
After grief of thick snows,
Icy rains—rough terrains of sorrow.

II

No time like the present, no time
For the past—this glide over small waves
Takes the boat's quiet list across
Skeins of rhythmic glistening—
Each oar-stroke destined for home,
Listening for currents, steering
Past mossy rocks along
Glacier-carved caves.

This time no morning doves divine
This spot, no cormorants stretch their necks
Like serpents. Gulls scrabble for invisible
Offerings. A hawk shadows the boat,
Disappears over tiny island sanctuaries, clears
The trees, wings for the secular highway,
Loud plow of cars—white noise
Sounds against the lap and slap
Of water on oars and sides of this vessel.

III

Translucent fish sortie below,
Their simple telepathy sensing
Ferns and bugs and algae.
Their collective unconscious—so absent
Of device, so innocent of reason and debate—
Hangs the passage of sun over water
As the dominant thought and presence
And motion—so much so, it excuses
All other meanderings
As beside the point.

With these gleams and buzzes and aquatic
Modes of thought, the day is sheared,
Cleared of its busyness. The primeval and primordial
Emerge like solemn dinosaurs and monster
Sea anemones from a burbled yawn
Below the surface. The pond at shore is three feet
Higher than the year before, in honor of these
Deep, disturbing, centered presences
That thrash only mildly
In their procession from Antiquity.

IV

The amblings of life and death and love lost
Are tossed on the furrows like driftwood,
Sinking to burial by water. New
And spiny bouts of love spiral like seedlings
Spread across the quilt of waves.

There is nothing that cannot be saved,
Preserved, in the wholeness
Of this pondscape. No map
Can better chart the source of meditation
And desire, mark the scheme
Of large and little things, or sketch
The face of an ancient webbed planet
With sea creatures and giant lizards
Still playing gently along its
Worn and glacier-wintered edge.

******

Prayers and Laetrile

The small oval seeds of apricots are a world
of hard promises, their meat
The stuff of antidote and poison.
In Mexico they cure cancer. Everywhere,
They make arsenic. Hope grinds them into
Poltice, powder for pills—selective killers of
Rogue cells. Prayer releases each
Molecule on a mission. Life
Over death. Faith over doubt. Love
Over annihilation. Laetrile
Seeks the cancer like a magnet
Troving for metal. Healthy cells have
Safe passage—hormones neutralize
The poison. Passover.

There is prayer in every healing. Thought
Directs molecules the way wind
Carries dandelion seeds. If
Prayer were laser,
It would pinpoint wayward
Metastases. But prayer
Is scattershot. Hit-or-miss. Guided
By hope, not cross-hair precision.
A lucky shot strikes its mark. Unlucky,
It only grazes its swollen target.
A gamble, prayer and laetrile. Love
Only heals in part.

******

White Matter

When the white matter softens around the inner
Ledge of the skull, and grooves settle in like
Tunnels, there is room
For detection of unseen forces. The simple things,
The ordinary passages and irksome tasks,
Grow terrible wings. Panic flutters into
Terror—of broken faucets, loosened doorknobs,
Faulty light switches, and the connecting
Line between them—how is it happening? Why?
In their mending, who will gain entry?

Cabals of janitors, plumbers, electricians
Appear as barely invited guests. So, now,
Who has the keys? Who moved the glass
to the table, that was distinctly on the counter?
Who has soured the milk, leaving it out
Each day to turn, subtly returning it
To the refrigerator before evening? Why
Did they leave the window open two inches—
Just to signal that they are watching? Who
Frayed the edges of the favorite jacket, taking
A file to it during the helplessness of sleep?

The fearful need we have for strangers.
That strangers will enter our most private spaces,
And, as we decay, will probe us, operate upon us,
Sew us, clean us. That in the end they will do no more
Than wipe us away. They will advance in force
When we are gone, mopping continually
In conspiratorial silence. They will disregard,
In unison, our sacred moments. With sly deliberation,
They will bleach away our glories and despair.
They will refuse to reflect, witness, honor
That we once were real, we once were here.

******

Cavenaugh

Cavenaugh's chin held an uneven set;
His head of hair was waning
Like low tide; and he left the coffee shop
Feeling a little colder
than when he went in.

He was thinking that the room he rented
Was small, but that he himself
Was becoming smaller,
so the room
Was gaining on him.

Not like Millie, his ex-wife,
who was spreading
Like an aspic left too long
In the sun; Gravity
Had affected them differently.

She was greater for it, earthier, as she
Bore and birthed each year;
He contracted, curling
Like those dried-apple sculptures
At the State fair—wizened,

But not wiser. Cavenaugh's
Coat had worn wafer thin;
In the light pierce of rain,
It clung like an apology,
Defying comfort. Small drops

Pinned him, crowned his head like sweat,
Tracing along crooked treads
From cheek to chin. The hollow
Sound on storefront windows seemed
To complain, "Not fair"—

Wherever he went, it rained.
He imagined heading Southwest
to test his theory
in drought conditions.

He stopped at Millie's
To cheat the rain; his excuse—
A postcard from Tommy—had she heard
He was shipping out?
Her door was half open, and he
Found her stirring omelet mix,

Her tears drizzling the batter;
I know, I know, he murmured.
She waved him off, an
Afterthought—and he seemed to remember
That once they had a child, nothing

Could make her feel small—
not all his losing money
On the horses, or throwing a leg
over the girls down at the bar.
Sure, she cried for two years, maybe

Even four; but then she just looked
Past him, as he continued
To shrink. He joked to friends
That she put him on the back shelf
With the broken knick-knacks;

He told other women that she
Mailed him out third class to save
postage. But it wasn't true—
When she used to look at him,
Almost through him—

When she curved next to him—
When she expected his shadow
To grow long, next to hers—
he felt so small that
The slightest wind

Carried him out. He fingered
the postcard. Millie's hair,
usually a river, was a landslide.
"Omelets, Tommy's favorite," she said,
Without asking him to stay.

* * * * * *

Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Notes from the Northwest

The following continues the series originally called Notes from New England, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998), and resumed after a long absence in issue 59 (October 2006). It is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, and perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

Road Diary, Portland, Oregon to Boston, Massachusetts

May 25, 2010—12:38 pm
On board Portland, Oregon-to-
Denver, Colorado Greyhound bus

For the next 3½ days I will be on a series of buses heading east from Portland, Oregon through Denver, Colorado, then Chicago, Illinois, then New York City, & finally arriving in Boston, Massachusetts. I've been on the cross-country bus trip a few times before, but not since 2004. Don't think it's changed much. Buses are still buses. Roads are still roads. I'm still recognizable to myself; still carrying bags of notebooks & novels & pens. I've got an iPod music player & a MacBook Pro laptop computer. Same body. Same John Lennon-y eyeglasses. A little lighter in weight.

And my purpose rings with some familiarity: to re-establish living ties with Boston, home, job, friends & family, & bring my beloved Kassi & all of our mundane & magical possessions there.

River to the left of the road, railroad tracks to the right. Brilliant, beautiful, countless green green trees beneath cool, overcast skies.

Hopeful.

******

May 25, 2010—2:23 pm
Along Hood River,
About 90 miles from Stanfield, Oregon

Trees have given way to brown hills topped by wind generators, not currently spinning. The bus has run alongside Hood River for hours now. It's peaceful. I've been tackling the editing of the new Scriptor Press RaiBook *World's Window: Ruminations Psychedelic & Otherwise, Being a Journal of my Travels in Peru*, by Christopher Patrick Gose. It was published in all four issues of *The Cenacle* in 2009. Now the challenge is to cut a 120-page text down to about 60-65 pages plus another 10-15 pages of photographs. 80 page book in all.

The final book is among these pages, the coherent narrative of an ayahuasca journey. My challenge is to trim it down to chapbook length & reveal its best worth. It's work I'm good at but by no means easy. I will be back at it tomorrow, I'd bet, pushing at a sane pace toward finishing it before arriving in Boston. It's possible. This will be the third & last RaiBook published in Seattle / Portland.

Passed a gorgeous frothing dam!

******

May 25, 2010—5:20 pm (or so)
I84 East—32 miles from LaGrande, Oregon

I've been occupying myself with Jeff Vandermeer's *City of Saints & Sinners,* a novel so deep & brilliant I am re-reading it & its sequel again before reading the third Ambergris novel, *Finch*.

The bus, now nearly half full, is again running through trees, though ones not as tall as those more westerly to Portland. They dot low green hills, capped by a great, grey sky.

Two observations: Vandermeer's fiction is final proof that there is great literature in the 21st century & some of it is fantastical in nature. Second, there are several examples, including his, of recent "fiction of the labyrinth"—others include Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* & Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*. Major works of fiction that one could say reach back to Dante's *Divine Comedy* & along the way to Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books.

I almost feel like a graduate student in English again, mulling this theme excitedly, thinking not an essay but a book crouches in these ideas. Yet it's more than that for I've been working on a fixtion, *Labyrinthine*, for 4 years, with a handwritten length of over 1000 pages & a structure & theme very much in this category that I'm excited about in similar works.

The question would be how? I've no interest in academic papers, per se; more of exploring the natures of these works. I think of other works, too, like Mervyn Peake's *Titus* novels. Even Hayao Miyazaki's 2001 film *Spirited Away*. Can music be labyrinthine? I'm thinking of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or The Beatles' *White Album*. What distinguishes labyrinthine art?

(Think of Kubrick's film *The Shining*—or even *2001* or *Eyes Wide Shut*)

The labyrinth contains something powerful. Could be something destructive or something beautiful. Or possibly both. Sometimes one is seeking to escape, sometimes to explore, sometimes to claim a valuable object or person.

There are traps, tricks, allies, & tricksters in the labyrinth. Once committed, one follows through. The TV show *Lost* is a labyrinth; its cousin *Fringe* is not. *The Prisoner* is a labyrinth; *The Fugitive* isn't. Labyrinths involve travel from the familiar through danger, to the foreign, very foreign. There isn't always victory. A quest may be labyrinthine in nature but I think it is only one kind.

My book *Labyrinthine* has multiple settings: a bar, a woods, a hotel among them. IT is not a quest, per se, more of a strange game that begins when six strangers each awake to the sound of a sharp noise behind them. Like an unseen gunshot. Each discovers himself or herself to be back somewhere in his or her past. No injuries but no explanations. The fixtion now bears dozens of characters, each working out a puzzle that could be many for many, or one for many. Structurally, the story works forward, backwards, sideways, multiply, contradictorily. It bears open borders with my other recent fixtions (*Things Change?* & *Why?*) & poetry series (*6 x 36 Nocturnes*, *New Songs (for Kassandra)*, & my current series *Many Musics*).

Reading Vandermeer again inspires me by his level of detail, his great writing, his deep imagination. His work is amazing.

The treesy hills are more brown & scrubby than before. A fence lines the road, rarely is there not one on the major roads in the U.S. Pass through but keep going. Stores up ahead will feed you & gas your car. Take your money. When there's a marker or monument, pay to see. *Then keep going.*

******

May 25, 2010—10:58 p.m.
Greyhound Bus Station
Boise, Idaho

Bus is getting cleaned & fueled, everybody out. Some bus stations are huge, some tiny, there's no real consistency. Each one different from the last & the next.

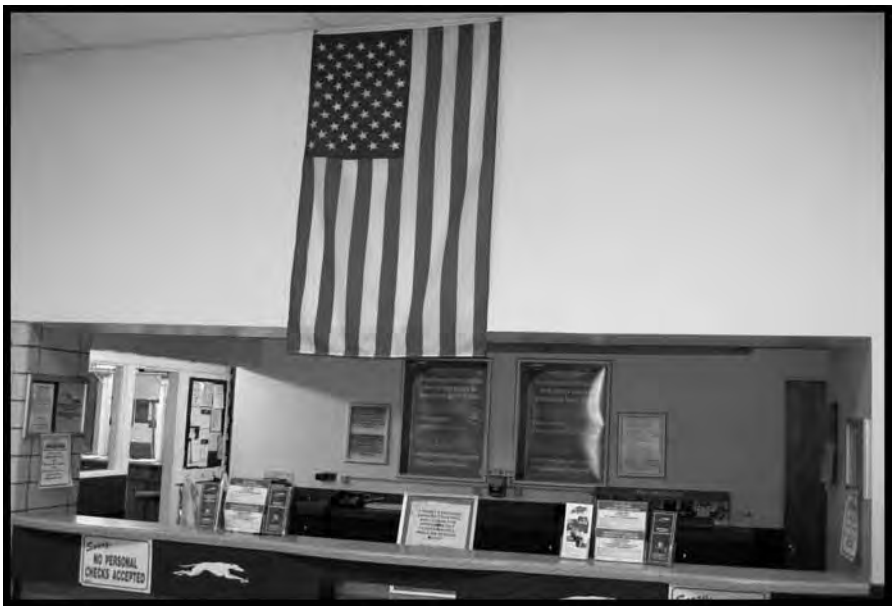
Aside from calls with KD, I've been off cyberspace for nearly half a day, & three days more to come or thereabouts. I've been writing & reading & editing, hours on end. At first I was sluggish but now I've found the rails, the groove, flow, etc. I just want to keep going.

I'm married, usually work full-time, & have many projects. That, & a desire to read, & sometimes to be the *enjoyer*, the *recipient* of another's work. Produce, receive, & mix it up in my head for more. I also love sleep & dreams, & writing dreams down. And there is so much I don't know, haven't experienced. The wish for all of this can sum to nothing getting a long stretch of attention, & it is attention, over & over, the rhythm set & the melody chased, which has best chance of producing fine Art. Which is my perpetual goal. What all of the above stew together for as goal.

I wondered if having days of hours would reveal me as one who could & still wished to produce good work—or, if less likely, but possible, I'd become one who did what he did for lack of other options, even mulling them. Half a day in, my mind is throttling steady in words. I'm calm & high both. Writing is my meditation, filling a page for me is contemplating the blank wall or chanting a mantra for another. I don't know why. Maybe there is no why. But gratefulness.

Bus still being cleaned, re-fueled. Lotta people waiting——————————

******



May 26, 2010—8:15 a.m. (or so)
On board Salt Lake City, Utah-to-
Denver, Colorado Greyhound Bus

It was a long night, I worked & read as far into it as I could—there was a long stretch after Boise bus station when I thrashed without ease.

Finally, exhausted, my body settled down & only my mind remained kinetic. There was a small town, about as generic as imaginable save for the graffiti

TINY
WINOS

painted on an old warehouse building. So deep in the night, I calmed & reflected on my luck at being OK, alive, well, not alone, & let myself mull the possibilities in returning to Boston, close again to loved places & loved ones both. The stress of the day finally diminished, & I fell into a dear, peaceful sleep for a couple of hours. It was all I got, but it was good. Worn down but not out.

******

May 26, 2010—Noontime
Just past Rock Springs, Wyoming

The landscape is flat, brown, scrubby, with distant hills. Road is straight, traffic sparse. The rest stops are places like McDonald's & gas stations. The chatter is dull, destination, family, work. Children whine. Conversations trade sentences that invariably begin with I, he, she, it, they. The land is flat, the road is flat, minds are flat. These are all related. I think every human brain is capable of the unimaginable yet few reach this potential. In a flat land, maybe a sober punitive God makes more sense. In the mountains, by the sea, deep in forest, not so much. I look for beauty in the Midwest, find it awhile, then run out, & pant for coastal air. Perhaps best I can say is that there is beauty here but I fail to find it sometimes. I am no enemy of this region but its brown scraggly skin implies a greenless eternity. Yet I reach for contact, for understanding, to undercut all my dour cries, & my eyes & hands not empty.

******

May 26, 2010—3:19 p.m.
Between Laramie, Wyoming & Fort Collins, Colorado

I've been thinking a long time on this topic & come up with five primary factors in one's life path:

1) Where you were born
2) When you were born
3) To whom you were born
4) The kind & intensity of your own efforts
5) Luck, chance, mystery

The first four are major elements, of course, but the fift, what I call the "hidden fifth" is the one completely out of the hands of one's self & one's loved ones. The hidden fifth is the one preachers, gurus, & the wide varieties of hustlers earn their bread from. It's the wild card in every life & I don't believe it can itself be fully controlled or manipulated. It's why the other four cannot be used to foretell anyone's life path. Church, science, markets, etc. would wish to steer it, know its secret. They don't. We should all be glad.

******

May 26, 2010—11 p.m. (or so)
Just past Ogallalla, Nebraska

Nearing 1½ days on the road, halfway as of 6 a.m., night-time on a cross-country bus is especially limited in possibility. Save for buses like this one that show movies & feature wireless Internet service. I'm too tired & crowded to engage any of it, but it does bring new aspects to the ride.

I wrote & read & edited again; it was good productive hours at it. I feel inclined toward sleep, what broken, crumby sleep is possible on a bus.

I remember thinking on this trips in the past, & now this one, that I've lived these days in transit, entirely in wheeled velocity. Strange to realize this. And one more. And about a half more after that.

Tired enough to maybe, simply, pass out—

******

May 27, 2010—6 a.m.
Greyhound Bus Station
Omaha, Nebraska

Ordinarily, this bus station, hardly a big room, would not be of much note but it was here back in December 2003 that my wife Kassi & I met for the first time. I was living in Connecticut, working, climbing out of my black'd heart's deep canker; she was at Creighton University. It was in this room that our long-distance correspondence became live in person for the first time.

It was because we met back then in this room that events led me back here, even in passing through. For all the bad luck and stupid decisions I've made, I count meeting Kassi & wedding her in 2005 as one of the best to show *I can do something right.*

Bus getting cleaned & fueled, won't be long.

Anyway, I've always thought it's good to note one's life markers when passing close by them.

******

May 27, 2010—10 a.m. (or so)
Somewhere in Iowa

I've made this East / West bus trip a few times but I doubt I'll do it alone again. I'm glad for the reason—moving to Boston, getting us an apartment—but it's long & exhausting. I'm glad for the time to work in solitude, but after two sleepless nights my mind is soft, blurry. One jerk tried to hassle me; I didn't take it but it was depressing to deal with. Tried talking to another fellow, nice enough, but no stick. I think I used to want traveling conversations with strangers. Less so now.

Humans wear each other out. Our cruelty is surpassed by our indifference. Most connections are fleeting & tenuous, & the meaningful ones must be guarded against decay, or losing that loved one & an irretrievable piece of heart.

Exhaustion withers, especially combined with conflict.

There's always a yet. Iowa is a beautiful green place. Wild green makes me happy, Nature's music in color, leaf & branch & blade. Each new hour arrives with its unspent juice. I still believe in life's mysteries, more powerful than its restraints.

******

May 27, 2010—4:11 p.m.
Nearing Chicago, Illinois

Strange afternoon. Buses late, connections to make, so Trailways added another bus to the mix; suddenly I was on a Chicago express. Good news. More good news is that this bus is wired for Internet. No shit.

So I decided to work on SpiritPlants Radio—"Encore Weekend" which features all the DJ shows of the past month. Updated the radio web page & made the announcement at a couple of dozen websites. Pretty much done. Left Kassi with playlist for stream, all good.

Now buried in rush hour traffic. Nearing 2½ days on the bus with the possibility of cutting 3½ days to 3¼ days. A meeting with a friend in New York City isn't going to happen so I'm eager to get me & my 3 heavy bags to Boston as soon as possible.

Half-filled bus, unusually comfortable seat. I may just give over to relaxing for awhile.

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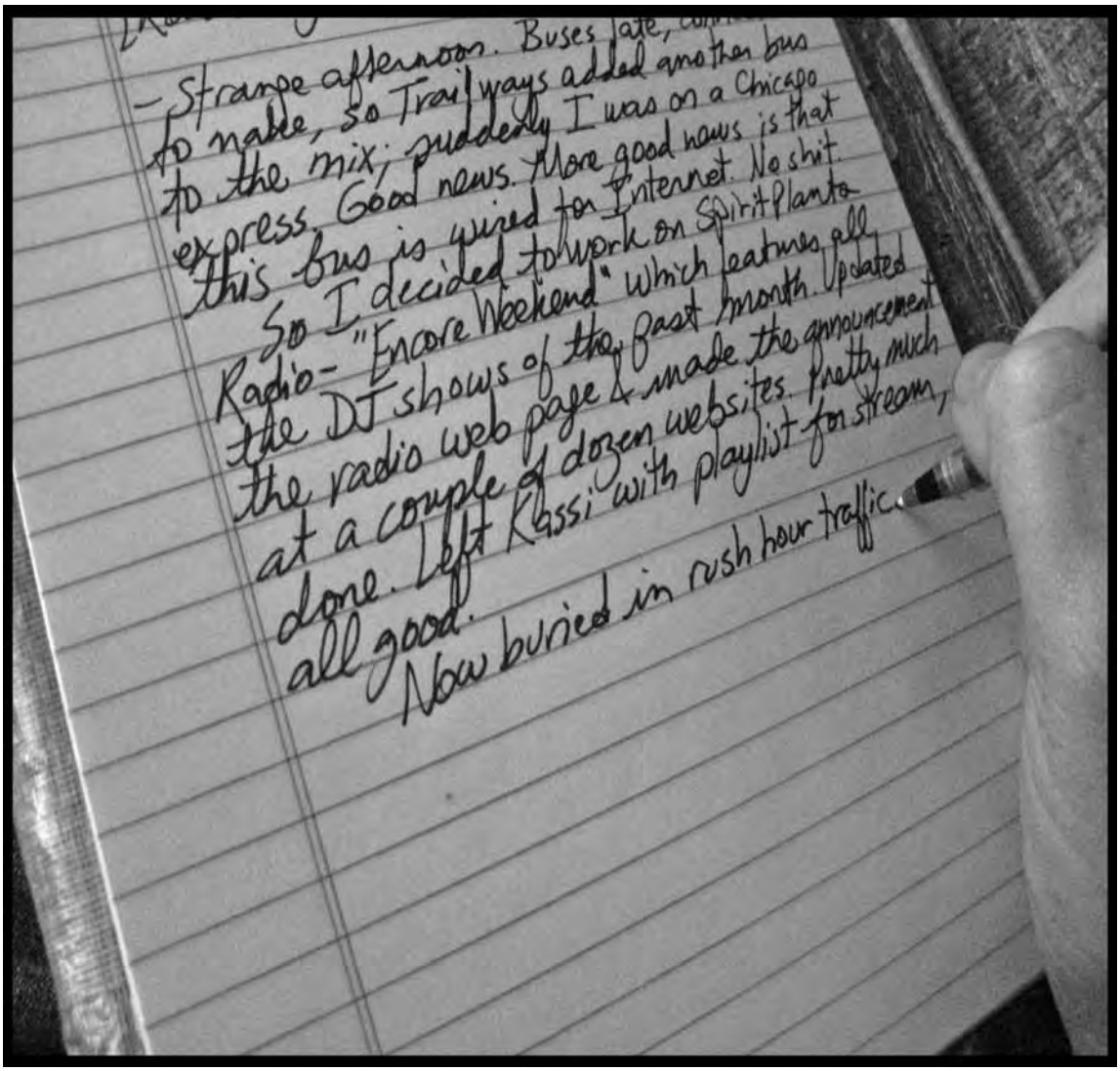

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Now buried in rush hour traffic.

May 27, 2010—9:45 p.m.
Chicago, Illinois-to-
Cleveland, Ohio Trailways Bus

One trouble of old buses is that don't work very well. This bus has no functioning seat lights for night time use.

So I'm using the light of my iPod, Polly, to write this, after my cell phone & MacBook Pro, both low on battery, ran out. Polly's battery won't stay on for long either.

Maybe just as well.

(Minutes later)

Another travel plaza & I bought a little Indiana night-light keychain. Writing in the dark, dark bus.

A thought worth writing in the dark: my intention is to embrace New England newly, & make my return one that matters. Starts humble, on a long bus ride just to find an apartment, & a job. But I don't want it to stay humble, won't let it. There will be benefits I returned, gladness for those who know me.

I don't know who yet but that's my promise in the this dark bus speeding the land.

******

May 28, 2010—12:30 a.m. (or so)
Nearing Cleveland, Ohio

<u>Night Paving</u>

Lightning slits apart the hour's
dark flesh, exposing old moments
drying & too sweet to lightly tongue
for a memory. I look for your face
with the next flash but find nothing
but the exploding torrent that is sentiment,
& a line of restless cars damning up
the road as crews furiously repair
or defend the insoluble.

******

May 28, 2010—near 2:30 a.m.
On board Cleveland, Ohio-to-
New York City Trailways Bus

This is penultimate bus, on it, my bags; all reduced to a seat & bags & a bus ready to roll—passed through Cleveland bus station more than once at this time of night—likely not again but who knows—previous entry's poem came from watching a lightning storm because the overhead seat lights on this bus don't work—all my beloved gadgets out of juice—so I watched & watched & then wrote the result—come back often to how I am still by writing, I meditate by writing, I am happy by writing. This trip has been a writing trip more than anything else—wanting to know if I can like always

Lights out. I can!

******

May 28, 2010—7:56 a.m.
An hour past Milesburg, Pennsylvania travel plaza

I had something resembling sleep last night for a few hours, bus quiet & half-empty, no jarring of frequent stops, sudden lights, orders to return in exactly 15 minutes, like the previous night. Slept in a wide seat, not too cold, it was simple mercy.

Breakfast at the venerable Milesburg, PA travel plaza & truck stop. A dime store diner in the wild mountains of Pennsylvania. A remembered cashier, her oft-repeated: "Here ye go!" Ate little donuts, a candy bar, a chunk of microwave pizza. I realized it's less laziness or indulgence than that the sugar rush is keeping me going. Travel is exciting, exhilarating, wearing, grinding.

My friend the poet Ric Amante sent me a copy of his book *Digging In*. I know many of the poems from having heard him read them aloud and / or publish them in *The Cenacle*. Yet he's re-written or re-titles may of them.

On the November pond,
last tendrils of fog.
Not so much
What we know
as how we receive.
Not so much
when we die
as how we leave.
Not the hare's wild scramble
but the cougar's clean leap

—from "In a Field, Clouds Passing"

I read your poems, Ric, old & new & refigured ones, this morning on my bus through the Pennsylvania mountains. Endless green trees. I am exhausted, dirty, & aching from the road across country. I find I can't speak plainly to people because that often requires casual, as thought half listening, & I am a bust open pore. I needed connection without explanation so I read your book. The sign passing says 26 miles to Hazleton, wherever that is. I'm still four hours from NYCity, & four more from Boston. One winter I was stuck in snow on a bus ride through these mountains. One sad spring stuck in miles of traffic. See you in about 15 hours. Grateful.

******

May 28, 2010—1:46 p.m.
On board NewYork City-to-Boston, Massachusetts
Greyhound Bus

Used what wiles I have to get an earlier bus ride to Boston, in NYCity less than an hour. Charging phone, iPod, MacBook Pro, & external battery using bus seat outlet—the green of late spring New England is gorgeous. Three days ago I was on the other coast. A plane could have gotten me here in 8 hours. But plane is quick re-location, not authentic travel.

Won't be arriving til 4:30. Ravenous for food. To make good of this effort. The holiday weekend, Memorial Day weekend, runs until Monday.

What can anyone do but contrive a better plan for living than the previous one, figure one's needs & wishes more subtly, hone one's gifts & skills, partner & collaborate with others with better ease, kinder humor? No sure map, no omniscient guru. A mind, hands, a heart, dreams some ridiculous, some possible, the mysteries of fortune, chance, divine assistance, a better steering the cosmos without & within. A prayer the Universe will provide if given a wish. Hope, the thing with feathers. Dreams, their cloaked instructions. Nature, its many examples of how beauty, complexity, & simplicity can fuse into living magic.

Mind, heart, hands. Go!

Ric Amante

To a Mockingbird

Dear mockingbird,
pull us out of our heads
into the melodic torrent crashing
at your soft charcoal throat.
Give us proper voice to express
the quickening leaps and dirges
of the era we're perched in.
Mockingbird,
teach us again to just shut down and sit
within the wild graces of your mimicry.
Much has been said already—
how do we begin to move deeper,
divested of half-solutions?
Mockingbird,
lift us to the next branch of kinship
where all paths conjoin, glimmer,
lead direct to the other.
The earth is a network
whose truths and eyes
are meant to expand.
Dear mockingbird,
bury us gaily with daily recreation.
A stack of notes from the edge of the chimney
and we merge, mend, release.

******

In Copley Square

It could be a sunny day like today—
gulls circling overhead,
delivery truck idling in the alley,
northwest breeze bending the tops
of curbside lindens. It could be a day like today
when death ambles up asking for
directions, some change, the time.
And you could respond, eye to eye—
whatever you want, I have,
wherever we're going, I'm ready,
however it happens, I'm here
to be led from something
I loved but never quite understood
to something I've never quite understood
but will love in the same way
I've been given this light and this world
to attend to, sit with, give away.

******

Morning Overtures from Maine

A fog-shrouded woman in a pink stocking cap
scuttles along the borders of frozen kale
behind the white blocks of the Five O'Clock Hotel.
She works as a spy in the network of light
and interrogates the shoreline nightly,
the red dot of her cigarette burning a hole
through a basket of thin gray sheets.

He steps out onto the salt-crusted back porch
to gather his cup of sunrise and wits—
beholds three green horses rearing up
through meadows of surf and dream.

Minus five and sea-smoke flares
in shifting, haunted tendrils—
frigid morning glories
climbing rails of Arctic air.

Offshore a trawler drags for quahogs—
large, sinewy clams tagged for bakes and stews.
On his last birthday Jean the sternman
blew out thirty-three blue and yellow candles
from the lap of a middle-aged stripper.
Tough in the winter up here.

******

On a Line from Pascal's Journal

Late one night
he pried the world apart
from its places and faces
and his refuge within.
Drew it toward him
slow and eager
as with any new love.
Glimpsed its light and dark
and distant turnings,
then entered the stillness
that grants the sky stars.
He severed all measurements,
got drunk on nothingness,
prepared for sleep.
At pillow's edge later,
blue flames and white flashes.
Locked eyes with the sun
and beheld sudden jewels.
Burned files and shed lives,
then screwed sight like a red fuse
back into the socket.
"Fire, fire, all is fire!"

******

The Counterman

Sometimes a man merely wields a rag—
wipes down a table,
wipes off a counter,
wipes away the palm and finger prints
smudging the glass panels of a pie case.
His dignity is intact,
at times even luminous—
a dove nestles in his white paper cap.
He's lived hard and long,
knows enough yet nothing at all—
toil remains a brother.
Closing time—
wooden chairs get flipped onto tabletops,
a pushbroom knocks the corners,
a zig-zag of mop strokes
leads back to the kitchen.
Another night of service
pulls him closer to the door.

******

You Can Get Here from There

Deep in the wooded Maine night
where stars breed song or silence,
you pull old friends and ghosts
to the woodstove's orange flames,
chain-smoke and sip the whiskey.
There is this life that needs telling
to listener, speaker, and spruce—
of drunken Quebec welders
who clamored for sardines and whores,
of dead bears propped up on outhouse seats,
of G.I.'s emptying rounds into barrels of Italian wine.
Tonight we hear you again, see you again
across the rickety camp table,
filaments of blue ringing sly brown eyes
that burned steady through the darkness
of eighty long and dear Decembers.
Out the back door against the toolshed
your last cord of wood—split and stacked—
waiting to bring heat and light
to the stories we'll be sharing about you
in this place that your spirit still owns.

* * * * * *

Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Labyrinthine

[a new fixtion]

Part Three.

(Continued)

"Beware & Be Aware."

lxxix. / xli. / xix.

Barefoot, Maya pads through the Hotel Noah, hallway, stairs, hallway, stairs. An open door. Goes in.

A room of silk, of cotton, of lace. Mirrors. Secret, quiet, flowing music. Rosy light, crimson curtains, shut.

An inner room, steaming, the sound of water.

Dreaming she shuts the door & breathes in the steam. Sheds her unfamiliar clothes & finds her way to the hot falling water.

Feels like she is disintegrating, feels good, her skin a sucking noise from scalp to toes.

Minutes pass. More minutes. She cries, briefly, not one to give over to it, does, briefly. Her body feels good, tired. Strange. Steps away from the steam toward the door. Listens.

Opens the door, nude, unafraid, unashamed. Too much roiling her for any of that.

Nothing. Nobody. Crimson curtains, rosy light. Silk, cotton, lace.

Unused to such material finery, she touches, & touches.

Would he like her better wearing any of these? Was Dylan like this? She didn't think so.

She looks down at her body. Skinny, she thinks, like always. Looks at the colors, arrayed on racks all around her. Thinks.

Why not? Smiles & begins to look with purpose. Still naked, sees no underwear. Ah well.

She read a book once when she was very little. There was a princess in a pink gown, fluffy. She was a powerful girl. She believed the kind should win. She travelled with her friends & told everyone what she believed.

The book had colored illustrations but no cover. The princess had long pink hair, like her gown, with a blonde streak, like Maya now but reversed. She was brave, & her friends said she was reckless too.

"Why do you always look for angry people? Strange forests? Festivals of fire & full moonlight?"

She laughed, how she usually replied. They approached a small house, at night, but she did not knock. Creeped around the house, looking for a window to see within.

Maya finds a long dress, not a puffy gown but pink like the stripe in her hair. It hangs a little loosely on her. Skinny. But it feels nice.

They watch the mother pray by her bedside. Her baby quiet or asleep in its low cradle. A few words slip from her mouth "God . . . belief . . . a code . . . a key . . . sad endless war . . . sad endless war"

The room contains no shoes as it contains no underwear. Maya looks in the mirror. Skinny. Smiles. Better. I need shoes, Dylan.

She stands, walks to the window opposite theirs. The window now glows, raises a square halo of dust, begins to hum, a tap, tapping, white petals gather sourcelessly around the woman as she leans on its sill & watches

Maya kisses the mirror then leaves the room, shutting the door softly. She feels more ready to meet Dylan.

Would he like her as well in patchie pants? He would. No doubts.

They watch her through the night, the smaller ones dozing silently. The illustration in the book also glows, seems multi-dimensional. In the corner a mirror. The princess nods & points. Her companions shake, no. The princess hikes up her dress & crawls through the window. The rest follow, some carry others. To the mirror, through the mirror, to the steaming room beyond.

"She's in danger, she remembered us, we have to protect her."

The woman hears them but as they do not approach her or her stripling, & their hurrying noise quickly ceases, she does not turn. Lets her gaze keep on the desert, on its lights, nearing, brighter than the coming dawn.

lxxx. / xlii. / xx.

I keep the housefly with me as I leave, no, really, I figure up a mesh cage for him out of an old green & white coffee cup & a piece of fishnet stockings, put a little something in his cup with him, decide to keep my key, smash the room's window & leave.

I know this shit won't end, I met a brilliant old man in the coop & he explained it all easily, we only talked twice, he didn't finish before they separated us for good—

"There was an hour, rising a brilliant shaft of hope" his checker jumps mine, he's a better player than me "homeless as a wild goat, become, it seemed lastly, a pure heat stalking heat" the second time we met he denied or refuted all of this—told me otherwise—so I had a choice "a careening petal without stem or soil." Jumps another checker. Won't play Flying Kings or forward/backward jumping "Dreaming by movement alone, glad hustling the days & miles, ever singing my bright cage, strumming its bars & calling this my music" most of the nurses & doctors were gentle with him, a little fearful. But one, a scrawny little black man with an unkempt beard, pushed him around, sometimes they laughed, argued, once screamed at each other "She's the fucking code & key!" "No, Charlie. You're a tired old man who still dreams about tight poon." "Fuck you, murderer! You murder all by keeping me prisoned here! All of you!" Mostly he was quiet, read, or held books before his face. We talked twice. "Sweet velvet blindness, hopeless preaching my path" beat me in ten moves & set them up again, quickly, like time mattered there. "A touch, another, nights crying wide to starlight on earth." Stopped. Stared at me hard. I nodded. I smiled. I tried to be open. "Hungry as a wild goat, an hour passed, many hours. Countless barking my songs, next tome, breaking vessel, worse

ruin." He stopped & would say no more. Our game was unfinished. OK. I left. Got up, walked to another part of the room, picked up one of my comic books I'd shared.

When he resumed it was to refute or deny all he'd said the first time. He was anxious, scared, he was trying to tell me something hard to tell, he'd gotten it wrong once, he was trying again. "Many hours, I stretched on, how to choose what to let crumble, which to call soul & all others rust?" He picked up one of my red checkers & put it in his mouth. Sucked it & talked. "What tonight is blithely letting go?"

We didn't talk again. The nurse who fought & friended him came at that moment & fetched him.

There was more. I tell the housefly as I stumble through puddles & mud.

I know now. Found out. Took years. It's that film. In one scene there's a letter, someone we can't see & don't know is reading it.

It says: "Bones of days restless to bury, let their dirge in shadows fall" there's night music getting louder, a death-sounding wail in piano & trumpet "Let their shaft strike my beast within, let the old blood burst, let these new hours consume" the room, the letter, everything explodes & there are endless minutes of silent white light. We're going there now to that room. Keep the key safe in there.

lxxxi. / xliii. / xxi.

I stand up, first time in hours, just stand damn up. The TV is dark, there's no hand on my shoulder now. I don't disbelieve either but nothing is happening now.

I look down at Tweety Bird, she's doing better. Lean down, remove the rubber bands. She's OK now, it's been rough, the scars are there, but she's back, hell, she's rocking. I dress her & put her under the blanket a bit. Her smile is a little hidden but bright & a little goofy as ever. So many times back then I held her & gulped her smile right into my heart. Is she real? Real as I need her to be.

But I have to go. Not sure why or where. Just out, maybe just a few minutes. I'll be back, I know that. But right now I have to go outside.

It's cold, clear, no snow, no wind, not too bad. My clothes are thin, & strange because I was nude so many hours. OK. Look around.

The motel is dark, I don't see a light in the office or any of the rooms. Across the highway is a cornfield, lit up a little by the big moon. It's quiet.

I turn away from the road & see another building set back from the motel & its units. Its interior is lamp-lit. A shadow moves inside.

I walk closer. A white shingled building with blue trim. Slanted roof painted yellow where it's visible. An old sign in front. "Flying Elephant Services." Strange, no car or truck parked in front.

I keep walking, no longer thinking why & asking myself if a lone woman with no jacket should be adventuring out in the winter countryside. Ahh.

I knock. What services?

The door opens & a brilliant, blinding light hits me, much brighter than what I saw through the building's window. I think I hear a voice say come in but I'm not sure. I walk in with my hands waving blindly before me.

Then I'm sitting. There's a gap but then I'm sitting & the blinding light is replaced

by a murk, almost greenish. I'm holding a warm mug, shaped to look like a turtle. Sniff, peppermint tea.

OK. The voice is talking, I think. My senses are struggling. I'm not scared, just confused.

The voice pauses, breathes. Thinking. "The rivet of every cause looses, no matter how high the wall, how massed the men, how right & cruel the lead temple's tome." Pauses. Where did this begin? The words remind me of a teacher I had in high school. He told us to call him Manny, his first name. He was strange & alluring. Made my thighs warm sitting in his class. I *hated* when he was expelled for fucking another girl. Made me furious it wasn't me. She got scared she was pregnant & told. She wasn't. I would have kept silent. In class he'd wander off his topic, I think I loved him a little, I think he prepared me for Preacher, loving the kind of man who's hyper-intelligent & makes you want to crush him a little with your thighs, with what you're sure you can do if you get him in your bed, his bed. Some bed. No bed. Whatever.

So this. He talks on in the murk, if it's a he, I really don't know, just a silhouette that moves once in awhile. "Looses, I say, air bites through, an hour, another, many breaths, wrong ideas take their hold a gentle lick at a time."

Mm. I like that. I don't say a word, don't breathe.

Then I fucking blow it by talking, talking before my brain has an idea it's going to "What services do you offer? Why are you working so late?" It was nerves. Thinking about Manny. One time, just once he was really close to me, it was his turn to monitor all-day detention. They caught me smoking a joint behind the gym. Fuck. *A joint*. Kids were smoking rock & sharing needles there every day, gang fucking cheerleaders who never told for fear of being kicked off the squad. A fucking joint.

So there I was & he leaned over me suddenly to make sure I was reading schoolwork not porn or comic books. I felt his breath as his eyes dove straight down my low-cut blouse. Pink & white striped. My friend Biscuit from college called it my candy cane jail bait slattern's blouse. Slattern. Ha!

That moment stiffened everything. Later when I was touching myself & remembering late at night I hoped he got a good hard stiffie from it. At the moment I disappeared somewhere & it was over. It was nothing & it was over too. He fucked someone else.

The door swings open & I get the hint. But he talks on for a bit more. Like I lost but I was going to know *exactly* how much. "Sin softens, becomes familiar, the poor, the outcast shift nearer, stay. Eventually a new high wall, next wrath of rivets, will roar beautifully, will last forever." There's a pause. I'm going, I'm going.

"Awhile."

Suddenly I'm outside again & the light through the window is not blinding & the silhouette moves a bit within.

Fuck. *Fuck.*

lxxxii. / xliv. / xxii.

Tide chips, time chides. Between the two, the whole answer, & little explain. Passage, change, the deep raw mathematics of want—

"Fuck that. You're saying it's all about pussy & death."

"Somewhat."

"Yah. Been said before, Jack. Said again & again, better, funnier, darker. Name it. Been

said. Even by you. Over & over."

"It's all one song . . . "

"You can look at it that way."

"Doesn't help."

"Nothing *helps*. Some things comfort, some harm. But nothing helps."

"Pussy & death."

"Yah, Jack. That's about it."

"What else?"

"What do you want? Trees? Stars? Happy talking dolphins? You can expand it out infinitely or reduce it to nearly nothing. But neither really works. You can't cap it, label it, understand it, call it good, & know it's never going to change."

"Pussy & death."

"Explains a lot, don't you think? The way humans cattle drive forward, like there's somewhere to get to, some beautiful arrival."

"Is there?"

"See, nobody knows. Nobody can account for any of it. Explain this hour, this minute, this square foot before your eyes. The world leaks all over, visibly, invisibly, contrary, & contrary to that. There are answers in mathematics, molecules, music, carnal violence, deed & unrelated deed."

"What then?"

"Nothing. No then. No arrival. One thing, the next, but no ordained order. Want, anger, hatred. Feeding, dark matter. Chocolate."

"What then?"

"Choice. Luck. Perspective. Memory. Hunger. The unknown. What's familiar & adds up to a principle or a correct deed, if enough is ignored. Connect this idea to that formula to some memory, or place them closely astride & call it something to bide by."

"None of this helps."

"*There is no help.* There is swimming blindly in an endless ocean."

"And that image doesn't work either, does it?"

"No."

"What then?"

"Nobody knows."

"But everything moves."

—Rift from the cosmos, from yon stellar intent, part of a primal reaching from onyx reaches to a floor no man may know—

"Fuck it"

"Her? Him?"

"It"

"A person?"

"It"

"Is that advice? An answer?"

"Fuck it."

—Knowing not what man does, but what he tries. Tide chips, time chides—

"No more drinks. This is useless."

"What will you do?"

"Nothing. Then the next."

—The endless water of years gathers finally—

"around limbs & heart"

—& everything goes"

He looks at me clear-eyed like that emptied bottle in front of him was spring water.

"If you saw me at work, you'd see another man. The work I did. I quit. I came here to tell her.

"None of it is enough anymore."

lxxxiii. / xliv. / xxiii.

What rises two remains one. The brilliant hand may sing til it forgets—

I remember their bodies distinct from each other, I don't know what this means exactly. Both young women, nearly the same age, how do I remember them like two different species?

'Stina moved like sunshine. She was light & quick. Her hands were cageless, not the holding kind though she'd grab mine sometimes—

Penny moved through deep water & I would swim down there with her—

Ah balls. I'm not good at this. I just don't know how to remember them. I don't think I'm going back—

The burnt leaf may rest forgetting among countless.

How does love forget so easily? I don't even remember being high so much.
What then? What was any of it?

I continue on, the Bridge of Glass still ascending. Looking back, I can still see where it crashed straight through the Noah Hotel. Like some magick trick, some crazy architect, watch this, I'll pass a bridge through this building & both will stand!

It's dimming now, lost in clouds, I don't remember it happening, it seemed like I was on an escalator for awhile then I'm walking & remembering them, how I went back & forth, how they changed names, how I lost them both in the end—

What rises one flesh ever remains.

Her body heated to my close breath, more to my touch. I learned her body like an untamed creature, pushed her deep into wordless passion, into hot, murky fantasy. I worked her by candle, by music, by costume, by sugar. It was a distinct life from the daily one. I read books about hard cosmic fucking & told her not to. I arranged the stage, insisted, but what happened there was choice, pure autonomy—

The mountain regards the leaf puny, careless time's lesser pet—

We failed in a few experiments early on. It's how one night I had them both. A beautifully poisonous night, poison that's followed me since, followed me here, been present even when I did not acknowledge it.

Maybe it was why I turned from drugs to dreams, from pussy to dreams, from everything to dreams, from my life—I wanted to expel that poison—

It begins as a simple lustful story—

What rises from a single cell, single thought, first gesturing act, ever sources whole—

I wanted to fuck them both, her & her hot fucking friend. I knew enough about best girlfriends to know that some are into a little licking, a little touching, a little sharing—that's how it started—a hard cock wanting double-fun pussy—

But—see—I forgot which one I loved that night—the poison took my memory. This sounds like bullshit but the next morning sitting with them, both trying to joke away their embarrassment, I could not remember which one I loved—this led to problems & ecstasies later—to things it could not have otherwise led to—

The hand will return, the leaf will remember, the web is strong & returns all to dream—

Then it was over. She smiled at us & left. I didn't see her again for a long time & seemed to resume happy with who had stayed. But I wondered. How did I know the right one stayed? That sounds lunatic & I thought so at the time. I made myself settle down like that night hadn't happened but it had—

The sea will swallow itself, the stars will croon their last light. What rises two will remain one—

Did they know over the years how I switched between them, how I could not remember from time to time? I never asked. Not once. If they knew, they never said. Never gave a hint's hint—

What rises two listens, comes, joins
all again—

So remembering their bodies isn't enough because the missing piece remains, swallowed by the poison. I tried telling Benny but he did not listen. Peculiarly waking dramas did not interest him. He'd gesture up a thousand nude girls of every shape, size, & color, & nod at me in that mocking smile way he had.

When does he show up on the Bridge?

lxxxiv. / xlvi. / xxiv.

Christa leans back in her shadows, remembers how she can do this, learned how in her younger years when a sexually rousing creature before she was ready or sure, regarded hungry by boys & men, some eyes curiously touching her blouse, her hips, some pressing, some pushing, nearly hating in their want, she would lean back, lean in, not cower but cloak, she learned even to re-direct if someone near to do so, she learned things subtle but those needed for survival, for while those curious eyes scrawled across her attention it was the pushers, the eyes bursting bright with plain want, sometimes she let them in a way, let the hot breath approach, let & let . . . then slipped off—

Bowie not her first love nor her first man. There were stories she told nobody, night she didn't think she'd come out walking still—

But it had been awhile—she'd tamped it down, found ways to re-direct herself finally, one too many dangers back then—

So Bowie had found a reformed girl, if new renewed. Not, it seemed, for he rent her veils by walking through them not noticing. Why would he? She sniffed so many women on him it made her cringe. She loved him, none before. Hardly called it love even in her secret heart.

He was far, & Gretta was still with him. They were three, even though she couldn't remember the moment if even it had happened, that they had sat or stood together.

Retreated, she watched the Ampitheatre's night pass, if it even did, she wondered.

"There is little but blood & consequence," the first one had explained, a preacher, she was so eager she took his hand clumsy & brought it to her small perfectly round breast. His words enflamed her, his touch was blind scorch as his fingers rested lightly on her hard, hard nipple, brushing back & forth across it, considering. "Moan for me" he said quietly, she nearly screamed but choked still. "Again," this time she obeyed. Fingers brushing back & forth, now slower, *ohhh*, now stopped. Gone. "Blood & consequence. Keep that. Don't come back here."

The next was younger, a rare one near her own age. He read books but she got nothing intellectual from him after a few outings. He'd had enough pussy to feel confident but not enough to feel grateful nor even close to enough to feel awe, humility, awkward happy laughter.

Another church, an unused balcony, a service going on, he was ripe for her plucking but as she let him grope his way through her tank top & shorts, she heard the bells that marked the halfway point of every service. His hand between her thighs, groping, where was that prize? Bells, & she wanted to ring with them, feel her body ringing. Little, nothing. Now his mouth on her breasts, little, nothing.

She pushed him away, on his back, thighs wide, pushing his jeans & white undies down, off, fingers doing as Preacher had taught, his gift, showing her how to nestle, nip, suck, grope, grab, squeeze. Stroke, stroke again. "Moan." Squeeze, stroke, stroke again. "Moan." Squeeze, squeeze harder, stroke. Bells ringing, building to their cacophony, their "noise approaching God making the world in the blinding love of his heart," squeeze, squeeze, squeeze, "Moan" "Moan" "Moan" "Come" "Come now, moan it out. Now! Now!" Beat it out of him, that boy cream, then kneeled down between his thighs & licked it, lathered it all over his thighs. Stood as he did not. Could not. Smiling, plucked up his whities, smiling, flung them into the congregation. Walked out, did not return. Little, nothing. Beautiful bells, beautiful bells.

There were others, it got murkier remembering. How known, how had was her body

when Bowie took her smiling, easy? Her heart was lightly awled at best, whatever her breasts & hips had known.

He found her where he did because she needed work, daily work, less of the old spiritual obsess in her heart but enough to convince her way in. They thought she was quiet but took matters of philosophy seriously. She let them think. When sent to cities, she dressed to convince, knew how, how much to show, how tight her clothes, she dressed like an obscure promise never said, never made.

Had she not met Bowie, she was not planning on returning there. Her companion knew, they'd agreed. He was in Seattle to find himself a boy lover, she to jump a bridge she'd found on a map. Others had jumped it.

Really? Really. Cambridge had ended it, ended her commitment. She was ready to be done. She hadn't wanted to approach Bowie, sitting there against that wall, lost like so many others they'd seen. Her friend Oliver said we have to, one more day, Christa. We promised each other.

She nodded, they walked over, settled quietly on either side of him. His face was tired, sad, chased.

She felt something. Something deep.

Blood & consequence.

lxxxv. / xlvii. / xxv.

The mystery is survival, tough the flesh & heart enough to bit a little, release a little, learn each hour's how.

"Nobody explained shit when I was young. Nothing. There were some worn ignorant prejudices, some stupid ideas about how the world worked, what it was. A lot of sentiment sincere & a lie both. How does the world work? I was on my own to find out."

Bowie nods, strokes her fine ass since he likes her listening on her belly. He likes some fucked-up shit. She obeys. She never thought she'd see him again.

"The years trench love's plain truths, chip & take in strands, ideals, bleed, break, mend, make." He's reading to her from that book he gave her years ago. Almost left when she thought she couldn't find it.

"So I looked for books like this, but there was a lot of intermediate shit first. See, nobody tells you, nobody. There are the books everyone seems to know, then the more hidden ones. Then the books the hidden ones mention.

"You look & look, read & read. Get to a point where the ideas get stale, argue with each other, bitch. Easy to stall, to back off a bit."

The scarf binding her hands to the bed board is still a little damp. Damp with girl-juice. Not hers. He gave her to midnight & specific instructions. She tried to think about that fine cock of his, though she'd seen others, but how he used it, mm, fuck a girl to damp his scarf to bound her while he fucked her with that magic cock? Yes, sir, & another please.

The mystery is hope, again hustling up faith in new sun & fruit, in the brilliant breaths of music.

Before waking, is it every night? On her knees, blindfolded, nude but a silk black kerchief on

her lap, told to bend forward, told things she couldn't remember, whispered in her ear, along her trembling back, her cold-roused nipples, the sense of fingers flowing a million of them along her, then under the kerchief & did her knees part, did they part willing, oh god——

Jazz wakes. She is in Cosmic Early's light, owning grasp. He is murmuring in that way of his, not awake or asleep, "Another wanting torso, arching ache, hope, near, mapless, another heart nods & smiles its notice, despair, sleep, rise, mate" the words get indistinct & she wished he would touch her with his purpose, let her within, he's old, but he knows & she does not, the closest she gets is when he orders her to pose nude against the moonlit window, to arch her back, cradle her breasts, hold her head back, pose, just like that, now moan a little, Jasmine, now a little more—

She'd never said her name to him nor told him anything, nor even brought her wallet, back safe with her friends—no ID, no name, far from home, how the fuck did he know?

Posing, hair loose around her shoulders, arching her back til it aching, cupping her cold breasts,

take me to the White Woods! Fuck me & take me to the White Woods! I have to find her! Nobody believes she exists! I came back & she was gone, every scrap. They try to tell me I had no sister but who the hell do they think saved me?

The mystery is desire, stroking a live piece of the world for pleasure, for effect

"Samantha"
"Maya"
"I don't know anymore"
"Know what?"
"Dylan. What was he? What was any of it? I'm the key? When does all this stop happening?"
"It's always been happening. You know that."
"It's been more since I left. Since I met Dylan. Now I'm here."
"Do you think it's just love?"
"I don't think anything about this clearly. I'm going to find Dylan but it's not going to end because I do."
"No."
"Do you know that?"
"No better than you do."
"Is he here?"
"Yes."
"Samantha, am I going to find him? Do I get that much?"
"Follow me."

—desire, gnawing moonlight on lone winter's shore, sweet bowl of prayers, for time enough to breach the blunt divide of space & blood, touch, music, wish—

"there" "it's dark, there's nobody in there" "go" "he was here?" "he works here" "works . . . ?" "they like him, he has a smile for every soul coming in" "I love his smile. I remember it

better than his voice. He's not here." "Keep walking. Look." "I know this room. That window." "You sent him back here, to find that window, see through it where he had to go" "When?" "Maya" "When?"

The mystery is dream, closest to freedom, to death, where all bloods clean & rain the skies

"Benny I'll snap your damn neck, I don't care if you're a dream complex or dream fugue or dream pile of dog shit."
"Jack, we both need something from each other. You have a question about two women, a question you can't even ask yet. It passes through me."
"What do you want?"
"Some want to find the White Woods & destroy them. Some want to harness them. For some a path runs through them but elsewhere."
"I don't have your answer. I got a nice bridge to sell you. Maybe it will take you right there."
"Maybe it will"
"Are you saying I have to keep following that damned bridge to the White Woods?"
"Nothing's simple, Jack. Nothing leads to anything else. That's the folly of waking linearity."
"Jealous, Benny?"
"You have to know. You could still turn back. It's within your will. That way back is shorter. You could be crawling through your own dear window in not too many steps."
"And you want me to say no?"

—where the broken softs & lessens, each hour a new mystery, what bravest to do?

Write lightly in burning breath across her slender nude torso, bound in this want, bound hard & tight in this endless mortal want, "Find heart's inmost den, wake many wants deep from daylight."

The mystery is mystery, naming that spire God or cracking that fine ass, mystery

I'm listening at the window, I brought Tweety Bird with me, we both dressed up a little, I warned her, we listen: "how breath can bark, sing, can say quietly, 'crush them now.'" I keep listening but the voice says no more. I find my hand furiously busy between my thighs, the one not holding Tweety Bird very tightly, we're going back in & not going to leave this time———

Mystery more in kindness binds
& love consumes
countless the books
nor their men
can explain.

Charlie walks on with his housefly, a red checker, & a comic book with several answers.

lxxxvi. / xlviii. / xxvi.

The mystery is survival—but also decay—the strongest will bend to something stronger—even calm, accept—so survive longer but not ever—this bears no explain, rules all, yet on each strives—years touch the flesh & heart enough to bite a little, release a little, learn each hour's how—& the next's—
the years trench love's plain truths, chip & take in strands; ideals, belief in & commitment to a right against a wrong; bleed, the body's confession of its vulnerability, its brave, thin cloak; mend, that it must remain, that it comforts; make, the subtle, sometimes brute push against sweet despair, chaos' entice.

(Walks on with his housefly, a red checker, & a comic book with several answers. Which answers? His eagle flies immeasurably high overhead)

The mystery is hope, again hustling up faith in new sun & fruit (we push the door open, this is excitement like feeling Preacher's breath was)*, in brilliant breaths of music—*

—another wanting torso, arching ache, hope, near, mapless (I try to remember other happiness, a little scared, try to gird myself in beautiful hours, there was a boy, fuck this is old, we nearly did but he backed away, he read books, I wanted to be his favorite book but I didn't know how, he touched me once, kissed me, leaned down, breathed in the perfume I'd dabbed between my breasts because I'd seen a famous actress do that on TV, oh, I wanted him to keep going! He moved, sent me a card a month later, I think he'd made it, a seagull maybe, in a blinding dusk & I still remember the words, he didn't sign it—

> **"To deny, to believe, and to doubt absolutely—**
> **this is for man what running is for a horse."**
> **—Pascal**

Go on! Touch them. Please. Touch them. Kiss, lightly, again. Bite a little, I am tough stuff. Deny, believe, doubt, kiss them! What running is for a horse, yes something, push my blouse back, you have to, doubt, believe, deny—*oh fuck!*
Doors shut behind
with a loud krak!)
Another heart nods
& smiles its notice, despair, sleep, rise
(Tweety Bird not in her arms, where the *fuck* is she? Look, down there—

The mystery is desire, stroking a live piece of the world, for effect,
it's hard to think this & believe there's much else,
much missing, desire, stroke, effect
Maya now in the alley between Noah Hotel
& Luna T's Cafe, she's fallen & something hurts
but something has always hurt this just
reminds her & she argues to the bright
green dumpster that pain not desire

but the bright green dumpster has
seen too much in this alley to
believe either argument is fully
true. (desire, gnawing moonlight on lone winter's shore,
sweet bowl of prayers,
for time enough to breach the blunt divide of
space blood touch
& colors music
wish.

Maya's dress has grown deep red, she finds herself bending over to look at it, to touch it, know it better, not knowing what this means, a moment ago she was wild grieving for Dylan now she is curled on a couch pushed haphazardly into the alley, a garish orange couch, curled into it as she crawls into her dress as it falls from her—

The mystery is dream, close to freedom, to death, where all bloods clean & rain the skies, & nothing before explains any to come, why? & nothing to come explains any gone by, & why?—where the broken softs & lessens, each other a new mystery, what bravest to—?

The words scroll slowly down the screen then jiggle, angle, tilt sideways, scroll up, fall off as they go, there's noise, it's not music, crying, lonely crying, young then old, or maybe a hurt dog, or some deep forest beast—

"Find heart's inmost den, wake many wants deep from daylight" a new drinker at Luna T's bar suddenly says, as if in reply, as if waking from somewhere else & now arrived here—

The TV keeps making its noise, its many yowl, til Mr. Bob shuts if off, nobody objects, *Triptown* wasn't usually like this—nobody objected—which was strange—

The mystery is mystery, naming that spire God or cracking that fine ass, mystery, mystery, how breath can bark, sing, can say quietly—

She watches Jack on the Bridge of Glass, further & further from her, yet still she watches, still sees him *clearly*, distance warps as she watches, now what, she wondered, a dream had sent her here, from a warm bed, was it empty again last night? Shit, she can't remember. She'd left before dawn, taken nothing, well, the leather jacket Jack had given her, unworn but undiscarded, changed her clothes three times, trying to remember how she'd looked back then, the little ways a period of life will affect one's clothes & hair, Jack hadn't too many demands, but she remembered his tastes—long hair, single braid, little makeup—didn't like short skirts, did like long ones—liked a bit of jewelry, she knew more, remembered more than she should—did—dressed some to memories—but time had passed, she wasn't going to see him as a sentiment—that dream was enough to convince her—& the warm bed she couldn't remember was she alone or paired in it?

She wouldn't arrive on time—the dream had told her—

—"crush them now." Mystery more in kindness binds & love consumes, countless the books nor their

men can explain—

that was what she did not—what she had discovered she could do—look further along the path best she could describe it to her clients—look further along the path—

it was honest work, or at least she did it honestly—she did indeed see as she told but two things always tangled her—she knew all people had this ability—she told only some of what she saw—the vision was too complex & deeply multi-dimensional to tell all—she tried to communicate a simple coherent version—what it meant she couldn't say, or chose not to say, or wasn't meant to say—she looked, she chose, she told—

of course dreams complicated it—the way her clients would appear in them—before they came to see her—long after—she thought of dreams as extended looks along the path, unfettered by a waking body, an expectant companion—

yet never a vision of Jack—until recently—then it seemed he was in every vision—she had to take some days off, call in sick, haha, he was bidding her along, come along, Penny, come Xtina, through the window in the old apartment above the S & G Pizza, onto the bridge, the Bridge of Glass—

She arrived, there he was, far off, warped closer in her view, & she knew where he was going & how he had to get there—
or its opposite
where & who who & where

Benny Big Dreams. The White Woods.

Benny had slept in her bed, in her dreams, lain very close to her, breathed in her heart's clearest spaces, hovered, close, maybe she had been tempted, maybe she'd loved him a little, especially at first, but nothing happened, he could not move closer to her than he did, she did not draw him an inch closer—it was Jack—he learned this from her over time—

They knew each other & Benny was the stronger, so Jack had never come to her in dreams til these past days. Something had changed. Jack had grown stronger, finally understood what she was, what he was, or Benny was letting him for some reason she could not trust. What then? What now? There was the path. She saw along to him, both eyes open, seeing as she did eyes shut, the warping view that would bring the far near to her. But she could not see farther than Jack. *Knowing* his path, but not seeing it. And not knowing it too exactly as well.
Benny Big Dreams.
The White Woods.
She leaned out the window & saw no better.

lxxxvii. / xlix. / xxvii.

Want is trigger, want is release, clue & code to what is not shown by lights. "I'm going to tell you flesh's secret, what you see around you, how to guage it." New drinker has a bottle of twelve-year-old Scotch on the bar before him. Mr. Bob had sold it to him after a friendly, lengthy conversation. He's poured a round, raised a toast—

"Listening?"

"Go on! We're taking mental notes!"

He nods at the jibe, undisturbed, the drinkers at the bar unconsciously lean closer.

"Now there will be a few exceptions to this but know, they are exceptions, & they are few." Respectful nods. Waiting.

—'what other, lighter world is dreaming all of you tonight?' is what he didn't say & wished to. 'How far from maps kings move by measuring blood?'—

"This land is one devoted *profoundly* to propagation & consumption. We are raised to be breeders & feeders." His audience shifts. Another one of these eggheads talking college shit don't got jack to do with

"pussy. Pussy!" They jump. He's old, krinkly white hair. Severe blue eyes. Could be someone's kindly gramps. They laugh brokenly.

"Not just any. You boys are being driven day & night toward pussy with numerous characteristics." He stops. Sips from his thick, ornate dark blue glass. Sips again. Considers. His listeners are rapt & uncertain.

"Driven day & night toward par-ticular pussy. Hear me out now," he holds up his hand like someone's arguing or fixing to leave.

"Young. Pretty. Thin. Scantily dressed." They laugh, but don't feel released. He's paused but not done.

"White." There's silence. True but a hard thing to hear said aloud.

"Female." Takes a moment to grasp. Some don't. He does not elaborate.

Then one speaks up. "That & a couple of hard jerks will get you a gob of spew in your hands."

Laughter. Looking now one to the other.

He sips again, unhurried. Maybe he ran a hardware store once, sold screwdrivers & saws to farmers & weekend handymen. Laughed with the rest at the Sunday funnies. So when did he turn, grow hard & quietly furious?

"I'm no racist, mister. Pretty piece of yellow or black or brown poon inviting me along, I'd smile & hold the door."

"But your society is not trading highest on them. It's a sliding scale, from prime on down. We're all measuring on that scale, just few of us know it much. Or at all."

They turn to me. "This old man your mouthpiece?" I shrug. Look at Rebecca's perfectly pretty self next to me sketching, toward Franny's fine ass, reaching high for a bottle of gin.

"He's not brave enough to call my thoughts his own. Cowardly toward advocating what many won't acknowledge in their own furious tidal deeps. Mankind has become a restless caged animal, embarrassed to nod truly that it is not led by will or mortality but by hunger for pussy, for cock, for meat, for brutish yowling dreams taken far into daylight."

"So we do we do, old man? Fuck in the streets day & night?"
"Fuck, yes," he spits back. "Streets, no. They con the mind into thinking order is possible, earth can be tamed, & owned, & named."

"We gonna live in the woods?"

"We *are* in the woods! Within, lost & huddling, harking any word, even noise nearby. Ready to leap & cry toward any hard spoke instructions. Without so alien to the lands, the seas, the—"

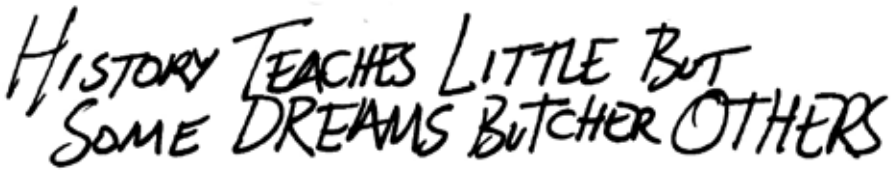
Someone switchs on the TV, *TripTown*'s earlier harass is gone. The old man silences, later speaks quietly again with Mr. Bob, at length.

Trigger, release. TV screen pulses in & out, slows, speeds, settles as young palms in shade materialize, a couple on a bench close, each a babe's first yowl, each a vessel of dust, close on a grim bench, hands learning new by way of forgetting other hours softly, incompletely, how far from days will again trench love's plain truths? Tell them nothing, forgive them, forgive life itself. Praise drowning as a new kind of arrival.

Look beyond them, their park, its trees, yonder to an old brick building, its midnight scholar, bent over his metaphors & formulae, connect two, one breaks, connect two more, three additional clasp into place, & another, all but two sigh & collapse, he reaches back, further & further back for a kinder frame to this world & its gods, & how chase its new sugars, how shed its shapely remains?

Her touch in the shadows. Her murmur. Neither of them had ever, she was more eager then him, he wanted her a step above an hour more, as his hand felt beneath her sweater she laughed, it tickled, he clenched, she moaned, he liked that, again, she obeyed, learned love is obeyance to will rooted far in loins' imperative, breathed twice as he stripped her slowly, slowly, wondered a moment at how he could know, jerked back & forward,

looks out his midnight window & back at his notes, he'd inked his hands black to finger paint his conclusion on every damn wall, ceiling floor



—What not shown by lights, want's trigger, want's release. World mulls kind the villain & stripling alike—

Gives breath like song to all.
"Shhh. Jazz, he'll find us." "I want him to find us." "No! Fuck! Shhh! Do you know what he'll do?" "It's our deal. You've done it already with that stupid college boy. I bet this time's better." "Let's go. She's nuts." "Go where? You two don't know where you are. Nobody knows where you are." "You're gonna let him do that to us, Jazz? Do you, & him—?" "I don't think so. He never asked. I don't know. He said bring you two. It's why you're here with me at all." "Why? Fuck, we're your friends!" "Shhh!" "I have to get back to the White Woods" "The what?" "He can get me there" "Is that where it happened? We always wondered about it, when you were gone. And your sister."

Jazz snaps open a latch, & slams the door behind her while they yell & shhh each other. "Please Jazz." "Please."

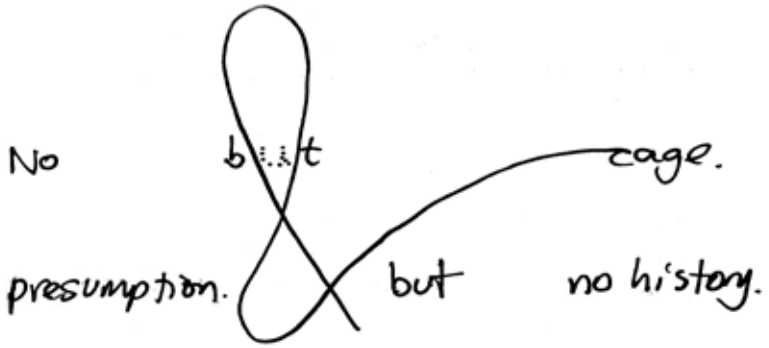
lxxxviii. / l. / xxviii.

There is no cage but perpective.
For a moment, start there.
This seat, these eyes, this mind.

Two bodies crash on a distant road whether you exist or not (there is a story involving two dreams, different years, different continents, their dreamers never met, though tis possible one or both crossed the other's path separated by years. The dreams were similar because each dreamed the other, dreamed the other's full life save for the dream each had of the other, it was a gap, a small gap, how long after all is the length of a dream in the space & breadth of a man's life? Nonetheless, a gap & it was the gap each remembered most vividly & mentioned to another in later waking, the one to his much younger lover, the other to her adopted mother, the gap stayed as the dream frayed about it in each dreamer's memory. How does one recall a gap when what defines it crumbles away? What indeed. The gap, you see what was each concluded held the answer to an important question each had, for each felt to be living a life defined by a gap, & the dream reinforced this, like another's entire life but for a gap & thus feel not to understand it because of this gap just as my own life bears this gap & I do not understand it, my full meaning lacks for this gap!

Sunny morning centuries ago a woman
 sang, her son slept in the folded
  clothes
(No No No
 cage history history
  but but
 presumption's history cages
cage. & of
 presumption.

(No cage. No history. No presumption.)
(No history. No cage. No presumption.)
(No presumption's cage. No history.)
(No history's cages. No presumptions.)
history.



Branches crystal snowflake hung with new meat, bound to no hour, what market near? no hour, what tribe would cook & eat? no hour, would one bear a supercomputer on his ring finger or a talon through his earlobe, both? no hour, the meat is cut from is spirit & cooked in fire & consumed, delusion that much changes, there is ecstasy, pain, slavery, meat, no hour, no hour, no hour *TripTown* shows these images faster & faster until a new image begins to emerge from the blue but the TV begins to smoke too, it seems important to watch, to see that image, there are sparks, the metal dials are melting from heat turn it off! No! Turn it off! Unplug it! It's only a goddamned TV show!

A moment of clarity. A dark, high wall in a cave, the words flaming across it

HAPPINESS IS PLEASURE IN PRESENCE

A door appears even more briefly though the flaming words, opens, a beautiful glare, an aching glare, a crying, moaning, laughing, leaping, wild glare, oh a hint!

the TV pulses twice more & implodes through the door.

"Shit my mother" cries one of the drinkers at the bar. The rest nod or stare.

lxxxix. / li. / xxix.

They wait. They wait longer. No light. Sitting back to back, hands crossed behind their backs, cuffed to each other.

"Why did she leave us?"

"I don't know, Lizzy."

"We're her *friends*."

"Not anymore. She tricked us."

"But why? We came here to help her. To watch out for her."

"She was always weird since she came back. Nobody knew what happened to her. And her sister."

"*We* were nice to her! But she wouldn't tell us either."

Lizzy starts crying.

"It doesn't matter. We're here. This is all that matters."

"I thought she was kidding. I thought they were toys or a magic trick when she put them on us!"

"Yah."

"Why aren't you scared?"

"Because they like that. It turns them on more."

"How do you know?"

"That guy. The college boy."

"Did he hurt you?"

"Yah. But mostly he liked fucking with my mind. Told me after that he had a few friends coming over. He wanted to watch them with me too. Asshole. Told me lots of shit before too."

"Like what?"

"Fuck it. I learned. They don't just want to hurt your body. They want to hurt your mind. Jazz told me something after she came back, it was like the only thing she ever said."

"What?"

"She said the bad ones leave a worse mark on your mind than your body. 'They tattoo their fucking soul on you,' she said. Something like that. We were really fucking high. Only time we ever smoked together."

"So they hurt her? I could never figure out how, like physically or what"

"She didn't say. She said that, looked at my bong, kicked it over & called me a fucking bitch cunt. Then she left."

"Fuck, Bobbie!"

"I just laughed. When I'm high I don't hold shit against people. Especially since Jazz wasn't usually a smoker. And her sister and all."

"You hold this against her?"

"Yah. I wonder if she had to trade us in to get free. Or if she needed some money. Maybe she's just way more deeply fucked up than we know."

Lizzy starts crying again. Bobbie listens for footsteps.

"*Soft, yield the world, lose nothing*," the words whispered so deep in Bobbie's mind she confuses them with her own thoughts. She freezes, whatever it is, it's starting. Says nothing to Lizzy who's sniffling still.

OK, Jazz, fuck, & fine, was this how it was for you, how it started? We smoked more than once but I figured you were talking shit, I don't remember bong talk.

"*bright in lash, sweet in tongue,*
cool as a friend in sickness & song"

Lizzie also doesn't know it was your sister's old boyfriend who fucked me. He wasn't a college boy either. And he didn't hurt me more than I liked at first—shit, Jazz, what the fuck is Lizzie doing here?

"*The worst comes, & comes again, world bides its wicked, yield, with pretty ease, lose nothing, you'll bury with the rest*"

the words stroke down her like a secret rain, she holds very still only to nearly jump when Lizzie whispers "You awake? You OK?"

"Yah" she croaks. "What's wrong? Do you hear something?" "No, Lizzie." "Maybe he won't hurt us. Maybe he just wants some fun." "I don't think he's one of those boys from class you let cop a feel, Lizzie.

Lizzie breaks there & then. Starts screaming. "You're Not Going to Hurt Me & My Friend! Fuck You! Let Us the Fuck Out!" She's shaking & wrenching Bobbie's hands; Bobbie tries to move with her but their cuffs attach to a nearby water pipe, no give.

"Fuck You! Fuck You All!"

Bobbie says nothing. What's there to say? She'd let Lizzie leave if she could.

Thing about being bound was it depended on who & where. It could be fun, way more fun than anyone would ever say on TV. Once she knew that, it seemed like she was closer to knowing a lot of other things. Smoking helped too.

Lizzie was convulsing but had pretty much shouted down.

And it wasn't all sexual. There was something else in it. She was getting that after a few times but then he turned. Something changed & it wasn't a strange fucked up but sort of fun sex game. It hurt. The mistake she made was ever thinking he cared about her, the one night cuffed to his bed in a bloody rose light, pussy carefully shaven into some symbol he would not explain, sometimes dressed in leather shards, something nothing but black sequins everywhere, & involving her heart was what fucked it up. This shit involved Jazz too, & her sister.

Lizzie was a damp lump behind her.

"*Yield the world, soft, nothing lost, in lone hours your best glowing text, what now shown common by lights.*"

Lizzie stiffened. Heard. Started swearing softly. "o shit o god o shit o god o shit o god"

"*The worst comes, sometimes sweet in tongue, a cool, wicked friend, soft, yield, fine music in a sheered heart's hour*"

Lizzie was shaking & jerking, terrified. "*Sheered heart's hour*"? What the fuck? She'd heard that before. Where? When? With him in that room? High with Jazz?

"Lizzie, stop," she says with sudden firmness. Lizzie pauses. "I'll tell him to let you go. To just take me. I'll do what he wants."

"What about you?"
"I can handle this. Just calm down. I'll work it out. Nobody will hurt you."
"You promise?"
"Yah! It will be OK."
"I'll get the cops! I swear!"
"We don't know where we are. Just stop crying, calm down. It will be OK."

The voice again but this time Lizzie doesn't respond. Doesn't hear. It's hers again, sliding through her easily, quietly, curious, yet not possessing despite its power, she closes her eyes, "*Lose nothing, yield the world, soft, perfection yearns you to be its slave, its losing bitch, its close to explain*" she remembers how it was, early on, "*its magick, shudders by your need to know, your fury to raise & do*," yes, & my fury to have something my own, & some truth too, "*World's still stretching, by dream & fist. Soft, yield. Nothing lost*."

She smiles. Did he want her back? Was he with Jazz now? Did he want them both? That might work . . .

Why Lizzie though? Was she a decoy? A way to get me here? The voice is gone, really gone, its smoky liquid fingers suddenly receded. Like never were. No, she whispers in her mind.

The door they had not seen, had forgotten for hours, starts to open. Light, hurting glare. Lizzie screams, & slumps.

lc. / lii. / xxx.

He's never seen this comic book before. *CurviLineaR ComiX* reads the title. "*For Those Lost*" reads its sub-title. "*Super Size Issue #2!*"

Shit. Charlie hated not starting a new series from the beginning. He looked at his checker, then the cup containing his housefly & key. Sighed. Might as well try it.

The colors inside were more intense than he'd ever seen. No artist or writer credits. No advertisements. A lot of text at first, giving way to pages of wordless mind-wrenching images. He read, by the waning sunlight of his deep woodsy cove.

"*War becomes common one day, pain another scrub in the yard, despair an eventual way of easy breathing.*" Words golden but sink into depthless regions of blood.

"*Embattled dreams a yea to the worst of it all, & a question: when did the wish for the next become want of what lost?*" Words harder to read, submerged in blood now, Charlie finds himself wading in to see them, to follow them next.

"*This is not peace*" from below suddenly blows up in his face. He cries, flees a moment. Returns. Just a fucking comic book. He's read a million of them. Weird but good so far. He likes weird.

"*Calm bearded fanatic & his stained leaflet for every downtown soul, artful tracing a web of ending, a delicious nightmare of the saved & soil.*" Charlie breathes, further in.

"*No peace.*" This time the blood takes him & he goes. Goes hard.

"A clumsy knock back at him & he cries free speech for one & all! til the cages ready."

Charlie starts at the figure slumped against the wall, at his two companions surrounding him. Who? . . .

Images fade back to words. "*Tonight in the avenue glare & strange pressing bodies, the eager chew of hours, dark tickling music hues the air with its lyric about heart's rootless tangle, angry refrain about empire's pathless source*." Charlie clutches his cup & checker as he reads again.

"This is not peace."

Arrived where he was. Dazed but OK. Reads a little more, to see if it takes.

"*War becomes common one day, its news blithely told from one sheered heart to the next.*" Now reading aloud as the crowded streaming city street bumps by. "*Kindness ranges down from shared drink to relaxed fists.*" Now shouting, seeing blood in every face, golden traces in lash, nose, lips, chin. "*From a calliope of faces like the sky's sparkling pool to maps of borders & waiting slaughter!*" *Someone grabs him & he whispers.*

"This is not peace."

Roughly led but not unkindly. Voice replies to him, text from his shut comic. "*What lost? What lost?*" Another behind him adds, "*What mending waits for each & all?*"

"We're glad you came but we all got to go now. This shit you're in now is not safe. It's spreading. Fuck."

xci. / liii. / xxxi.

The way is called dis-illusion, say again, speak it hard, a truth can't be left on a crate to stare brutally & useless. Dis-illusion, walking the humble path among shifting men & common ideas. Humble path, the inner smack to breathe & bow, & again.

Maya's red dress becomes her tool, a strip of it around her wound, then another to cushion her hand as she discovers her path is through the back of the couch through the hole in the brick wall it nearly conceals. The couch is moldy, little tough but since it won't budge to her efforts she has to force her way through it.

What remains of it she wraps around her breasts & hips, & a thin strip around her forehead. Not one to wear dresses when jeans would do, Maya still wishes Dylan could have seen her in it. She holds her breath against the dust & dirt, & pushes in.

Reck the tallest wall & how its indefensible hour nears. Great glaring tome, too, ivory & gold, god to minions & artillery, later come its burn, blind smiling dust.

She falls through with a painful thump. Dust blinds her a moment, all is white, then settles, all is still white.

She looks down at her hands, see them fine. Looks up, all white. Further up, still white. Further up, way way up, a knot of blue, so far & small she blinks, looks away, looks up again, still there.

Looks behind her, brick wall fading as she stunned watches, gone.

The way is called dis-illusion, that any heart finer than its bowels, (remember the old song: shit is beautiful!), that any golden vessel of faiths not some long, subtle hustle for sweet young meat, (the honeyed spot before too many other bees have come there), or a begged home beyond the soil (bury me in the wordless glare, burn me & my every page, puff my ashes to the woods & stars, better ever that than deathless kingdoms of men, leave me out of man-dreamed or conjured eternities, little faith in my heart from this world that any where men are not slightly bonded by mortality would be better, any god or heaven contrived by men will roar often with primal bloodlust garbed in manners & tradition & commandments, burn me in the glare & if specks of my being feed a tree or a star or a hungry trout, so much more the better) (Not to die another ragged man buried in undone vows)

Maya ranges along the wall, so white she cannot look on it directly. Decides to simply close her eyes, & this helps. A lot. She sees now. Faces straight to the wall & looks through it as though it wasn't there. Opens eyes, tests with hands. Still there, still blinding. Closes her eyes again.

The way is called dis-illusion, waking hour's new brutal reports, another falls in a desert sucking freely on blood these years, & the king laughs heartily from his high window, tells the one about the priest, the whore, the monkey with a cock fore & aft, & the night they all meet in a bar, one of them biker hippie bars, you see the priest was trying to get the whore to turn by her evil ways & come to the Christ but the whore would not until the priest explained how the Christ would have convinced her that a friendly funny two-cocked monkey was an inherently evil thing or why she should turn by her days & nights with him, she called him Ernie like that kids' show you know, Ernie with the funny laugh, she laughs like that when Ernie the two-cocked monkey is fucking her fore & aft, his & hers, & the priest has almost convinced her with his many words & sad dog look but then he really blows his case, she's left the monkey at the bar & is sleeping in his bed that night with only thoughts of purity when he moves under her blanket with two himself, one strapped on, why should the Christ get all this cunty goodness—some for him, the rest for me! he cries & dives in—

the king laughs & laughs & laughs

—no bridge of glass high enough for silence, Maya suddenly looks up with her eyes closed—there! wow!—there! Maya sees Jack & Jack looks down & sees Maya—several words but—

"How do we?"
"It's all of us, but I'm the key"
"Where?"
"The White Woods. You know."
"I was there with Dylan, we met John there"

"John?"

then the wall begins to teeter loudly & Maya stops looking up, which risk more, keeps her eyes closed & hands over her head & face as she hears its ugly weight give to gravity some, then more, then crash around her but not a mark, nothing visible, she seems OK, uncurls from her huddle. Now . . .

All passes, & passes again. Jack is still looking down but nothing to see as the clouds thick again. That pretty hippy girl, skinny, young, the pink streak in her blonde hair—she was down there—but what? An ally? A fellow captive? For a moment he was standing facing her, she wearing the ragged bits of a silk dress, he saw what was there, from all sides, enjoyed his perspective enough to lightly test the tightness of her cunt, her weightless pretty tits, the freshness of her mouth in the moment of shock she had after his because he saw her first—almost before he knew who she was—almost—but not for his fucking, he still bloodlusted Xtina's body, Penny's, both in truth, & Maya while a tight pretty little thing didn't sway his cock's obsessive eye—so, too long in figuring this much, Jack thinks: she, & I, & the others, have to get to the White Woods. *Passes, & passes again*. *Everything shits, everything's soil*, Jack still doesn't move along. Angry about all of this. Angry he attached a viral message to Xtina along Benny's fat dream ass & he knew she would try to find him now, he was getting stronger than Benny & did not know why.

There was a room they'd sat together a few times awhile back, Jack thought of it as their Truce Room for they simply talked

Two armchairs in the room, between them a small table, teak wood, a pale blue vase on it, there was a rosy light to the room from unknown source—

they arrived separately, seeming to arrive simultaneously each time, Jack would blink, & firstly hear the click of a wall aperture closing shut tight—

Benny would have a large thick blue glass tumbler of Scotch & a cigar, lean back like a plantation owner at his evening relax, Jack would hunch in his chair, feeling a couple of points down already in the first minute here—

"I can convince you dreams are better than your flesh living, & you cannot do the same for your side."
"I don't know you can do this as well as you think"
Benny laughs, puffs, sips. Concedes a few points back, maybe—
"What comfort in breathing, meals of warm bread, a safe nest?"
"Why do you ask? You know those things are wonderful to me"
"You have them here too. Without end."
"It's not my battlefield, Benny. I don't feel the victories in Dreamland or the pleasures."
Benny looks up at the dim ceiling & opens his mouth impossibly wide. Stars blow out, & music, blow through the ceiling, & carry it away. Jack watches, amazed despite, & looks at Benny sadly.
"I know. I know."

"Tell me what you know, Jack."
"You need a counterpart. You want to heal the rift between waking & dreaming."
He laughs, then louder, then nods. "But we'd both give up our worlds doing so. We'd willing seal ourselves, use our joined lives to create the new bond. No more sleeping to dream. No more waking to live. All one."
"Why me?"
"I don't know, Jack. I never know all of the parts, no matter what you think. I don't know why me for that matter."
"Find someone else, Benny"
"I would but I can't. There isn't. I don't know," confused, Benny would usually desolve the room & they'd part, truce over again—

Benny never gave up, still hadn't, which made using him to get to Xtina all the worse, & bringing Xtina into such a bad idea—

Some said it was a rival, some said it was a sequel. Some said it was a remake or simply another version of **RemoteLand**. Called *Three Inches of Blood* tho this title never appeared on the screen. When Jack's path on the Bridge of Glass arrives him at the movie theater, this is the movie playing.

Stops. A movie theatre? Appears so. Two-sided marquee is framed in blinking bulbs, hangs above the entrance. Both sides say *Three Inches of Blood* in large red letters; in smaller, black letters one side says *If You Are Lost*. He has to walk a few feet to read the small black letters on the other side:

> Jump the Bridge, Jack!

He sees no theatre employees, no ticket-sellers or popcorn vendor. Yet when he walks into the huge old theatre itself, he's not alone. It's pretty crowded. No seats at all in fact but up front. He in the screen-glaring gloom for a seat in a nearly empty row.

The screen is still a glare to him, & the sound is an angry buzz. He sits, waits. OK, whoever, here I am.

I loved movies when I was a kid. Sometimes when shit was bad at school & home I'd go three times a week. It was just an escape for a long time, I didn't care what I saw too much.

Then a theatre opened up that changed me. It had a funny name . . . what? Nada Film School. I didn't know at first that nada meant "nothing" in Spanish, & I didn't know til way later that this theatre was named after someone, a man or a family, I was never sure.

They showed strange movies. I don't mean it was one of those snobby art theatres. I got into those later, for a little while.

Nada Film School showed student films, unfinished movies, home movies, & sometimes movies people knew but usually cut up collage style. Maybe it showed complete famous movies too, I don't know, probably, but I don't remember them.

I cried when it closed & yet what's funny is that nobody was nice to me there. I started going when I was 16, 17, & I went a lot, but nobody ever nodded friendly to me, sometimes I wondered if they'd just kick me out one day or not let me in. So I was careful. I was quiet. A lot of people weren't, they'd hoot & boo something they didn't like—

Why am I back here? It's the same place. Telling me to jump & fucking with my memories at the same time.

It's not Benny, I don't think. After it was torn down & a huge mall put in its place, I never dreamed about being in it. Just coming & finding it gone. Every time. In my dreams it wasn't there even to get kicked out of. So I had my memories & they dimmed over the years.

I sniff. Yes, they sold a weird spiced popcorn & spiced cola & spiced chocolate, & their combined scent *lived* in the theater—whoever's doing this to me is deep in my head, deeper than Benny's ever been. Deeper than Penelope or Xtina or the countless junkies & potheads who filled my wasted life.

Thing is, I *tried* to dream of this place. At best I came to the door & it was closed. Didn't look much like the Nada either. Not *my* Nada.

So this is no more of a dream than anything else since I climbed out the window over the S & G Pizza. My back hurts again too. Was it all that walking or these shitty seats?

The screen begins to clear, there's music, piano music quiet & sad. Image of a flame at a far distance. Burning, burning, not coming closer.

The flame is replaced slowly by a night-time street corner, the music is gone, there is silence, gas street lamps, buildings one & two stories in shadow, then eventually footsteps. A woman, more a girl, long hair, maybe blonde, begins crossing the street, steps hurrying, but then a louder noise than her steps, a hulking vehicle, driven fast, wildly, bearing down on her purposefully, a light, her face, pretty, blue eyes swelling to crimson, a sweet mouth open in crying terror—

Suddenly, a feast. A long table bright & heavy with platters & bouquets, men in tuxedos, women in gowns, their faces completely featureless even as their laughing & chewing & guttural tongues all clack & clatter, the camera moves closer, to the tan puckered skin of a cooked beast, rolling over grapes a shiny one at a time, into the glare again this time of shiny silverware & into faces, blank, blank faces & down into low-cut bodices, sweet upraised breasts with hard, roused nipples & down flat stomachs into shaven tight cunts, in & out as though fucking hard & the music moans by saxophone, a hard push & now ringing tongue wetly around a large ready cock, the camera lens wet like a tongue loving blowing this cock & swallowing its blown seed, & out, out, out, the glare again & here are bars, prison bars, the feast is inside a great cage, a blunt, endless cage with no door—

Noise, lights, acrid & sweet smells everywhere, the screen gone, the theatre gone, Jack cannot see but isn't blind just images, a great caterwaul of images bears him whole, too fast to see til a few repeat over & over, a room in rosy light, holding a letter fiercely, a hand, a known hand pushing away or pulling near or both, a lilting shadow he cries toward, noise becomes a voice or a pur. Body gone, world gone, nothing explodes again & again til he has no ears but is deaf. It won't end. *It won't ever end.*

Then, silence. Stillness. Eyes closed, a body again. Lying among covers & pillows.

A voice deep inside his head. "Everything's shit, everything soil. All's blooming despite." A pause. Breathing. "Jump the Bridge, Jack."

"Jack." Another voice.
"Jack." No! Whatever it is.

"Jack, open your eyes!"
Her voice. Eyes opening. Her face. Her smile. That damned pink hanky she called a nightgown she'd wear when she wanted cock for hours. "Crazy man." That loving tone. Better than her perfect tits or fine fucking ass. *That tone.*
"Is it over?"
"Is what over, Jack?"

xcii. / liv. / xxxii.

How Bowie ended up in New Mexico the first time explains how he came to share her bed now, explains a lot, like how he knows the preacher in town, how he knew Rosie, how he ended up back here now, why Paula, whose ideas of desire run into places where silence & bare touch, orgasms brewed in body blow up in mind is more than willing to costume for him, wear his restraints, move with him deeper into what most would call, if generous, seriously fucked up erotic spaces

but how get anywhere that matters lightly & cleanly. Live on the surface, see what the surface has to offer & none else—

"You just like coming up with new ways to smack my ass, Freddy"
"Yah."
"Rosie's was nicer though"
"This a test?"
"You know I'm right"
"I know it doesn't matter"
"Girls have egos, need a little stroking."
"Yah."
"Mmm. That kind too, Freddy."

Freddy Ready, what she knew him by back then, what she still called him, it gave them both some comfort, they'd both lost a lot since—

Bowie & the preacher, not yet a priest, were up in Oregon, on a secret unofficial mission; they were mushrooms, living in Fort Stevens by the ocean. They'd been sent to form an alliance with the mushrooms, as though this was possible, Bowe'd laughed but his partner took it seriously—

"Fuck 'em, who cares what they think. If we can make real contact, become mushrooms, then we'll see, we'll be closer, we'll be closer!"

He believed, he really believed, & Bowie was his partner & best friend & that's why they agreed. The future preacher was halfway to his someday profession already. Bowie covered for him, for them both. It was hard, it wasn't going to last, but the preacher saw their chance & they took it, brothers, it had been so many years now! Really. No. Bowie stumbles in the screen-glaring gloom for a sit in a nearly empty row.

The screen is still a glare to him, & the sound is an angry buzz. He sits, waits. OK, whoever, here I am.

I loved movies when I was a kid. Sometimes when shit was bad at school & home I'd

go three times a week. It was just an escape for a long time, I didn't care what I saw too much.

Then a theatre opened up that changed me. It had a funny name . . . what? . . . Nada Film School. I didn't know at first that nada meant "nothing" in Spanish, & I didn't know til way later that this theatre was named after someone, a man or a family, I was never sure.

They showed strange movies. I don't mean it was one of those snobby art theatres. I got into those later, for a little while.

Nada Film School showed student films, unfinished (*everything to dusk, no less. This hour's rosy light, toneful, lashless song. A turning face's known smile, known need, mapless want, like ocean's every explain)(the preacher readies contrary prayers*)(*tall man in war, still a boy's green fields in his mind*)(*All's blooming, everything to dusk*)(*no less.*)

Bowie on the film's screen as phases incoherently blot him, for a moment he & Jack regard each other.

"What happened?"
"She's the key. The blonde girl."
"Who?"
"Her eyes turn blue to crimson."
"Where?"
"The White Woods."

The screen burns then as Bowie watches from his end, it was a chicken shack on the far edge of town, & Jack watches on his end, the fire consumes Nada Film School as he leaves, the Bridge of Glass once more endless before him—

xciii. / lv. / xxxiii.

Nothing goes away, nothing returns, there's the hope & hell of it. This a verity, a principle to build on, or something simple & cynical, a forgery of faith & experiential intelligence?

Nothing goes away, nothing returns, contradiction, koan, maybe a mental lozenge if worked long with, something to carry along, use in easy hours & hard ones—

Nothing goes away, nothing returns, not much easy comfort in it, more warning & strange reassurance.

Genny looks again at Tweety Bird. Tweety again, looks back. Blinks & looks back.

"No" Genny says.

Tweety blinks.

"No" Genny says.

Tweety blinks again.

"Fuck" Genny concedes.

A smile on a hard shell of a face? Yes, & less a shell of a face than some artificial skin. Blink.

"To deny, to believe, and to doubt absolutely." Blink. "This is for man what running is for a horse." Blink.

Her voice in my head. She hasn't transformed to human but something has happened.

I turn to the man in the murk. I don't know he's a man but my thighs seem to think

so.

"Nothing goes away, nothing returns, a blind face still turns, moaning for more, moaning to break."

Is it Tweety or Murk-man? I don't know now. Without thinking, like the previous time, I leap for the light-switch on the wall, hoping for something—

Nobody's here. Tweety Bird & me. She's not blinking. No voices in or out of my head. Fuck.

Shit. I turn off the light, welcome back the murk. Sure enough.

"The hour when youth snapped, when mystery became hustles, years minutes." A long pause. This guy should take on Preacher in a Battle of Pregnant Pauses.

When he starts up again, though, it's like I've made him really angry, every word of his is a soft, pressing hand within my clothes, a dozen fingers crawling my body, & a dozen more too, I am held, I am stroked, I am had too many ways to know hard I cum or how many times "Moaning for more, moaning to break, for a glaring love's ceaseless pitch, for an end to beginnings, & a cease to all ends."

O—fucking—God! It feels like my knees & eyeballs are coming as hard as my thighs. I'm strafed with simultaneous orgasms I don't know how to say it. Murk Man was pissed that I considered him versus Preacher in my thoughts, so he bombed me head to foot with comings—or fucking something like that.

He's not done talking though his words release my body. I don't know what that means. "Nothing goes away, nothing returns. Not to meet again in flesh, I will sate you all in dust." Then silence.

I wait. Wait some more. Risk it. "Don't kick me more again. I won't try the lights again, I promise." Silence. Waiting. Maybe just silence.

"I don't know why I came here or twice. I don't know why I can't see you or how you did all that to me. I don't know what the fuck is up with my doll."

Still waiting. Or still nothing.

"Maybe you can help me. There's someone, a man, like you. Maybe you won't care because you're a man & I'm here." I pause, lost. "He's never touched me but I love him. I don't know where he is or I guess where I am. But something is going on. I just want to ask him. I don't know anymore, worse than before."

I feel something now. A rhythm. Breath. Beat. He's not touching me again. But I feel his presence. Before it was angry, erotic, taking. Now it's kind, it's soothing. He's lifting me, a strong, light feeling, I hold Tweety Bird as we rise. Blinks. Says nothing.

xciv. / lvi. / xxxiv.

What then. Told her path to the White Woods is clearing. Told to prepare herself. Told, slowly, words to hear like breathing, "Your first step within may be your last step without."

She nods. Believes more that her sister is in the White Woods.

"Undress. There is soap, oils. A razor blade. Every inch."

He's gone. She's not even sure who said those words.

"You won't see them again."

"Don't hurt them," she says quietly. Says it despite.

"Some eat others" is the reply.

"Do they get razors too!" she yells as the bathroom lights go on & where she's been brought appears as a copper fixtures & multiple mirror bathroom.

Last words for her. "No clothes. Leave them at the door. Bathe slowly."

Jazz knows she's being watched as she undresses. As she showers. As she picks up the razor, softens her pussy with oils, shaves it clean slowly & thoroughly. As she steps out to the steamy room. Her clothes gone.

A moment of fear. She's nude. Cosmic Early is gone. He's given her wish, or maybe this is his dreaming & he's consented to her entry.

She closes the toilet lid & sits on it, in a hunch. The wall next to her lights up a TV screen.

The TV shows a small house, somebody's home, & there is a woman talking. Mumbling. Singing. "Small bombs half-made lie among icons & manifestos." Camera moves in green murk between rooms. "Once, at a signal, we too hid our children under the family's prize piano, listened to small heartbeats impossibly quick. No more." Silence. The camera still ranges among poor's possessions, clothes, a few old books. One wrapped in silk. Cared for items. Known items. The singing resumes, now about a forgotten town, in flames.

"You will walk plain in this place until your ego & humility are both broken. Until you grasp beauty not by its rare shows but by its steady presence, how it moves through all with light's reveal & music's potency. Stand. Stand!"

She stands, still glistening. The TV screen is gone where there is a doorway now. The singing raises higher a bit. She listens. She walks through.

xcv. / lvii. / xxxv.

Not demand of world an answer & thus not build an answer's world. As simple, as complex as that.

Hunger, not cloak it like a slattern's bauble. Reveal the sunshine in a seeking hand, the world of its powerful wish.

Fear, what it does not teach or tell. What indeed.

Death, the hard rift in any explain, in every explain.

Or wash free with the stars in morning light.

"Begin with those."

"Then what?"

"Choose a setting. Luna T's Cafe. The White Woods. Noah Hotel. Elsewhere."

"Then?"

"Decide which character, use your intuition, who would fit well? Maybe more than one?"

"And?"

"Add words. Watch the pages flow, one to the next, tens, then hundreds."

"Why?"

"Because the pages parallel your hours, have become a measure between them. Your clock. How you know."

"Is it formula?"

"More rhythm. More beat. Old yearns, what few new ones. Most of them long familiar."

"Why then?"

"There are canvases on the wall, tomatoes & peppers. The radio was playing Led Zeppelin, now Talking Heads. People come & go this all night sandwich shop, a few familiar. The after-midnight rats. Like you, yourselves."

Not demand of the world an answer & thus not build an answer's world, what then?

If no answer, what solid ground in mind to give perspective, suggest path?

Hunger, not cloak it like a slattern's bauble, but what desire's music without its cloak? Want storms high & low for the hidden—

Fear, what it does not teach or tell, if anything. On a strange bridge without end, looking for a loved friend, cuffed tight & a strange heavy breath nears.

Death, the hard rift in any explain, for it bears all throughout & awaits all finally, yet no moment to truck with it equally, plainly.

Or wash free with stars in morning light, is that enough, is any enough?

"Better"

"Is it? Or just more."

Try again: not demand of the world an answer & thus not build an answer's world, Charlie Pigeonfoot is in a completely darkened room. His possessions are near him, there was a blackout but they were not taken, there may have been a fight over this, or not. He does not know.

Hunger, not cloak it like a slattern's bauble, Maya moves ahead, the hours are lossless now between her arrival & the next step she takes. It's a game, all of it, like she & the otheres played back in that room. A tired game, she thinks. Not knowing how to shift it to her advantage. Moving ahead.

Fear, what does it not teach or tell, Bowie wants to see where the chicken shack was, where Rosie brought them, dried mushrooms in a paper bag traveled from the Oregon coast. Where she ate them, where they met.

Death, the hard rift in any explain, Genny is no longer where she was, there is sadness & a complex want here, hurt & heal in strange mixture. What words?

Or wash free with stars in morning light, Jack is also impatient, like Maya, he wouldn't call this a game but because he sees no coherent rules or controlling force. Jump the bridge, Jack!

Jump the Bridge, Jack!

Dare me, go on, once more.

xcvi. / lviii. / xxxvi.

All alone, all suffering, yes. When the door opens fully, it's not Bobbie they take, & there's no time to negotiate. Lizzie's gone. Gone like she never was.

All is suffering, yes, so one suffers, Lizzie moves, uncuffed, along a rosie-lit corridor. She's calm now, calm like all that screaming before was an act. It was in that she was protecting Bobbie, making her focus her fear on another's anguish.

There's brute force behind her keeping her moving, & more up front, directing the single way.

The great books preach so, of men with glaring swords & hard, clean faiths, the kind Lizzie

had known her all life, the kind she'd learned to obey & manipulate. Sexualized young by the world she lived in, she chose to work among protectors males & females. Work innocence & virginity to a hard sheen, one nobody would touch. Work her inviolate cherry into an explosive none would dare touch off, work in fear, work it so deep that she lived on countless levels in her mind, one for each set of curious hands with power, with an influential word.

She knew Jazz was crazy to negotiate her friends for anything, that men who did that took & crushed without blinking. It would end badly.

She knew Bobbie would get a smack on the ass, maybe a bit more, nothing too different from her college boyfriend. It would be OK, she guessed.

Her own fate depended on who she was brought to. If they knew someone in common. How negotiable he was or how tight & unwilling he liked his bed toys.

They cry, they roar, their prayers rise on burning swine & well-stoked women to bursting skies,

yes, she'd stroked a few cocks, large fearful eyes, talking fast & slow, learned how to wet her lips before & make the noises they liked, submissive but enjoying noises. And a few cunts along the way too. She preferred cocks, women were too savvy to believe her too much. She should have expected shit would blow not by a man's cock-led insistence of bound & tied cherry treat, but a woman—

a fucking girl. She'd mis-read Jazz. Mis-read the whole damned thing. Thought she had it in control, finally get to the power Jazz had some line on, wasting it on searching for her sister.

fists gesture the forests, mountains, challenge legends of the seas. They fall too.

The room approached, & the men were gone, & the door was locked behind her.

"Undress."

"Please."

"Undress."

"Please. Don't hurt me."

"Undress or it will go worse."

She says nothing.

"Slowly."

All alone, all suffering, yes. Great books preach of men resting astride harems, among their gods, dreaming toward what will alone can do.

Not the first time she's done it. Sometimes it was enough, no matter Bobbie'd mocked her. She'd kept a roomful of men watching, no more, it was performance in itself. The tremble. The grunt. the fearful look around. Find one, just one who enjoyed it a little less than the others, find him, look at him, smile at him, a ghost of one at most, something in it desperate, & maybe just a whiff's whiff of a promise. You don't *really* want to share me with all these grubby beasts? Sloppy seconds or maybe forty-thirds?

They fall too. Whisper in spittle, breathe in drowning gasps, reach a last time toward the glare, falter, know. No happiness in loving the bars, endless singing their song.

Look at him no more. But his shift shifts the room. In not all then none, a weird honor among these lunatics. They would let her go on down to her panties, then it would stop. Maybe nude, but then no more. Maybe told to crawl on the bed prepared, pose. But that was it.

All is suffering, yes, so one suffers. Each will choke blind & pass the hard rift, its burning

blankness, past what great books may say. Music of an open hand.

She'd be told to dress & go. She'd dress & go. In truth she wasn't sure why she'd survived so far so well. And there was no audience this time. No weak man to hook. Nobody to focus on in this room. Rosy light. Two armchairs, a small table between them, a vase. Thin, pretty.

Tank top, off. Skirt, off. Bra, removed. A pause. Silence. A room so heavy with silence she could hardly finish. Finishes.

"Turn." "Again." "Bend." "More." The directions are given in a tone so even nothing tells from it. She turns, again, bends, bends more. This part is familiar. She knows it well. But no watching eyes. She obeys, & again.

What chirps & morning light gave hint when, in glistening hours, nothing explained & all shone without a net.

There was one, she remembers, remembers unwilling but still. It was close as she came to feeling something for anyone. His face was hard, handsome, a man not a boy. His eyes fascinated her. His eyes were storms, gales, oceans, moved quick & slow. His hands tempted toward her, she felt it, felt an equal tug from her belly, from her groin. She would have with him, watch who did.

xcvii. / lix. / xxxvii.

Soft, tend the croon of bones. Reck these dust running the hours, crossing new blooms, a life's spark among squall & demise. Wish for what next. Want of what lost.

The question in the grieving place is not one of whereto but one of wherefrom. Some will ask endless, will bloody the walls & bury their years. Some will do less, let the regrets come along, let them keep feeding. Keep the cankers near, think it better than otherwise.

I dreamed the grieving place one morning, wept violently in this dream, woke unknowing what it was or what it meant—

It may be a room in the No-Tell, or it may be part of *TripTown* or even **RemoteLand** or the name of Noisy Children's next album. It may just be dream detritus, potent detritus, but it's escaped onto this page, traveled from its writhing origin, has changed & will change again—

A place of accumulation without future or plan. A place which raises to the moment, & echoes back & back—a place of familiar hours & scenes yet foreign, alien, forbidding, a place one could call *anti-earth*—

It was the wanting to know closer, want to know, want to know. What had I missed? What close, what dear. Soft, croon of bones, snap of flesh, when flesh sings with sweat, singes with sweat—what didn't I know? What would remain words, wants, what great, broad absence, visible in every adored shape of the day, remained? Remains? Could it be otherwise—

"Soft, tend the croon of bones" Bobbie snaps awake. "Shh, a friend." "You took Lizzie." "Who?" "Lizzie! My friend." "There is no Lizzie. You've been imagining her." "She's my friend." "I know. Since you were young. That day at the ocean." "We met at school! I haven't known her that long." "Shh. I'll help you if I can." "Where's Jazz?! I know this is about her." Silence. "You could have taken me. I wanted you to. You were too quick." Silence. "Are you going to help

me?" "You have a chance." "Are you going to hurt me?" Silence. "I'll do what you want if you let Lizzie go. Don't hurt her. She doesn't know." "Know what?" "About stuff." "What kind of stuff?" The voice is nearer. She can't feel the cuffs anymore but she is still bound in some way. She wants to cry but she knows they like it. She can't feel the floor but she's not in water.

She's scared. Maybe they did let Lizzie go. Maybe it was a trick.

"What do I have to do?"

"Relax. We'll chat now."

"The worst comes, sometimes sweet in tongue, a cool, wicked friend, soft, yield, fine music in a sheered heart's hour"

it was what he said the first time, she knew it was for her, knew she had something Jazz's sister didn't. Why can't I remember her name? Fuck.

Think. Think! Is this him again? "Fine new torso yet sweeting, soft, draping rosy light" she gasps, knows "how smiling gestures spied, a turning word's sugar's thoughtless gift" she wrenches her body blindly & tumbles forward in a complete turn.

On the beach. That one time. He called it "nights blowing wide of a thousand pink splendors & frail, forgotten shades" though it was one night. Nobody knew. They shared one look, few words. Any?

This isn't much of a chat. There were many of those. Nobody knew that either. She'd hated the computer til then but now she was hungry for it. For that little chat box they'd talk in.

Talk. Some nights it was like he wrote out novels to her. She'd read. She'd touch herself. Some nights she'd wait. He'd give an instruction. She'd do it. Was it sexual, ever? She couldn't remember.

"Soft, again, let what come not cut through this hungry cry. Arrive new with unmade questions, more ready in yesteryear's salmon dusk" *was this him?* Why now? Why like this? She would have come on a word. He disappeared & Jazz's sister followed him. Maybe. Nobody knew for sure. Jazz didn't think so. "It wasn't like that." What did she know?

Yah, what did she know. Did he exchange a look with her too that day on the beach? Had he collected all the girls that day?

I don't fucking care.

"Is it you? Tell me. I need to know." Silence.

She remembers one. Focusing very hard on her thighs she opens them wide, trembling, not even sure she's still dressed. "Breathe, breathe twice" she whispers, then more strongly, "mix your hours fine, invent your god's strength sole by lesson of how last it goes." Please take me, please take me, please take me . . .

She's in a bed, a room littered with mirrors, velvet, rosy light but deeply bloodly rosie light, on the bed, her thighs wide as she'd willed them. The door opening, blinding glare of it.

xcviii. / lx. / xxxviii.

Better than deathless kingdoms of men, bury me in the wordless glare, burn me & my every raucous page, puff my ash to words & stars;

Bowie had learned what the mushrooms know, what they experience when they consume humans, Bowie had experienced this, the simple metaphysical explosion, he hadn't really come back from that night & neither had the preacher. The difference between them was that Paula had eaten him & he'd panicked, forced her to gag, the melding hadn't worked, gone wrong, what the fuck were any of these words? He'd gone to Rosie's grieving place, & then through it elsewhere, taking her to places less place-full, til they were nowhere at all & divided in a sense, some returning to her live torso, to the bodied live, some remaining, & he came back too, he didn't know how, but wasn't back as he'd gone. The priest was back too, but his division was a dirty one, left him divided in worse ways—

Let me out of man-dreamed eternals, little faith in men unbound by mortality, all its gods & heavens will still garb in commandments & roar with primal bloodlust;

Rosie had held his hand as they evaporated, it was to tell to whom she'd thought she was clinging to. Father? Mother? First boyfriend? A secret teacher when she'd still been a primal, giggling bit? All of them. She followed him, walked with him, pressed ahead. At the time he couldn't see or know well what she'd seen but his dreams of that endless night had cleared it for him, dreams he'd cry & swipe for in the morning & little keep. One night, thinking he'd record the dream, if it came & he woke from it, he found himself at dawn listening to himself on tape crying & yelling, Jump the Bridge! Jump the Bridge!

Burn me in the glare, let specks of my being feed tree or star or hungry trout, so much the better, not to die another ragged man buried in undone vows;

They evaporated into each other & he felt, became her intensest moments, the first time she'd tasted a peppermint ice cream cone, how it accelerated on her lips & tongue, how she felt flying, she wasn't breathing anymore, nobody noticed, she was small but not small enough to be novel anymore, this taste followed her, it was her guide what to near what to avoid, what guided her the first night a man undressed her, beheld her torso in his rented bed, a breath, another, peppermint was that moment, peppermint was his touch, peppermint was the hour, she knew the scent the night she'd left her husband, watched him sleeping as she walked out the door into the desert full of lights, peppermint receded as she watched him tangle at time & space to retrieve her, she smelled no peppermint as he groped blindly into the ether, the malleable matter of existence itself, his hands gently calling her, calling, then fading back, fading back having brushed near, nearer, & she did not come, sent back a fire with him, all she could do, burn the town of their house, their union, send him far, for now, far—

Bury me, burn me, the desert I scatter will remember, the sweeter a touch to what I was, stars & woods will shine on because once I shone;

The chicken shack had burned too but not to the ground. Enough to close it. Everyone in town was spooked for a long time & nobody would go near it. Soon, it simply remained.

Enough of a reputation to remain untouched over the years. Must have been the Lights.

and, if not, there's a pretty idea to a short, hard being & a long, windblown forgetting.

"You're going in there?"
"Yah."
"You shouldn't. Nobody does."
"I know."
"Come on, Freddy. Do you really want to go into all that?"
"Wait here."
"No."
"No."
"I'm coming."
"No.

xcix. / lxi. / xxxix.

What cracks the world of its central tangle: whither bound?
"I don't have your answer."
Or what flesh remembers when none else, marking of lost hours & tumbled vows.
"But I'm with you. I'm with you always."
Prove it. Prove your presence.
"Everywhere you look, every scattered thing you see, every sound, every taste, every smell, all of it is proof. Your worst terrors, body fears, heart crumbles, woes so deep in your bones you don't know. The doubt you feel & how some hours so blow this doubt."
Can I say no to this? Can I demand more?
"Everything. You don't know & you want to. In your best & worst. This moment is laid plain for you to know. I'm with you always."

When still a fine new torso, faith sums in a sparkle, a chase to the water, sugar's fresh excitement.
Rebecca's blue eyes. True. Truth. I say nothing.
Dreams squall through in possibles not eternals.
Merry Muse regards me. "It's not up to you to decide belief. You are faith's instrument. It will use you as it wishes."

Work it closer, listen, always there with me? "Always. The worst of it."

Faith's instrument, when the hours are awful. When the corridors are jagged, impeded worse than dream's cruel tries.

Her blues eyes. True. Truth.
"None for you but to
sing."

New love comes in rosy shade, lashless song. A breath, another. A memory of another year's pink

disruption.

Mercy what flesh remembers washes free with stars in morning light.

Faith's instrument. Everywhere, everything. The worse of it.

What speaks tonight, what moves this pen, is my hand & something not my hand. I've begged to feel it blow through me, ride me, have me, cast me, no peace, no complaint, all music.

"Fear"
"I know"
"Fear. Fucking fear."
"I know. It never goes away."
"Fear."
"Listen to what you wrote: 'what cracks the world's tangle is how & again it cracks & does not fall.'"

"It's all lies."
"Yes, of course."
"Because lie implies truth?"
"Because nothing tells simply."
"If at all."
"If at all."
"Then what? I walk through days & miles among those who press truth & lies on me. I lose myself & do the same."
"Lose yourself."
"Yes. When I trade in truth & lies, I lose myself. Lose the groove, the way change soothes & teaches at best, & retain wrong certainties. Nothing, simply to share a tongue & another hour with others."
"How else?"
"I don't know."
"Ask for what you need. No matter how fruitless it seems. No matter how pathetic. I am with you in this asking. I am with you always."

******

c. / lxii. / xl.

We remember in the movement
of hands, a voice from another
room, one holiday, maybe two.
The years were music, food, & plans;
we remember to learn & grieve.
Grieve, to remember better.

There are hours, there are gestures. Habit, where rust grows, where it abides, where it eats.

There is memory, what rules crookedly. What worked, what didn't. Still works, still trying.

There is fear, the tangle of blood's push, bones' hunger, consciousness, mystery. Some explain, another.

It was like this, these people, this place. The moon above. Blink, & another live set. New people, new place. Things Change. Why? Yes. Now continue.

"Samantha."
"Maya."
"Is he close?"
"Are you ready?"
"I don't know. Yes. I'd like to have some clothes on."
Samantha laughs.
"He won't notice."
"He's a boy. If I'm dressed half-naked like this, he'll notice."
"He knows all that."
"All what?"

Genny holds Tweety Bird as she is taken by miles & hours toward her wish. She wants for a hair brush, some fresh underwear, a new name & identity. Does not know who to thank or how. Holds Tweety & wonders what Preacher will say.

"It's both of us or none, Preacher. She's come back to me, she stays."

Charlie Pigeonfoot is waiting for whoever is holding him this time to return. He looks up in the darkness & imagines his eagle above this place—whatever place it is—high above & somehow able to hear & come.

Here me, come. Hear me, come. I'm asking. I'm asking. Here me, come.

Bowie pushes into the chicken shack, Paula tries to follow but he won't let her. Leaves her with a word "Wait" & pushes in. What happened that night is still here, heavy here, nothing has moved since. Rosie is still here. The preacher is too. Strong presences of each.

How to start. The mushrooms have filled this place & he will do what the government dreamed

but not for them.

Jack looks over the side of the Bridge of Glass for a long time. Tries to remember Xtina's body, or Penny's. Even the hippy girl's, way down below.

The message is blunt but sent from whom is unclear.

She approaches him, running, flying, crying, so close, as his eyes close & he leaps from the Bridge.

Now it will change again, all of it, there is wild movement everywhere, rust screams from a thousand shadows, a thousand thousand—

Now it will change again & still again, there is easy movement where all was stuck & airless, flesh will name & it will pursue & for a moment it will control—a fish, a swishing hip, a cry of voices fill the canyon & the night replies in soothe—

Now it will change, change, & still change again, the music is always saying so, the trees & blooms, the buzz & chirps, the winds, the seas, watch men raise great heights, watch them settle an inch, an hour at a time—

Tell me, then, what of all this? Change, & change again, Jack closes his eyes & jumps the Bridge of Glass as she runs for him too late

What does she do? She leaps too. See her go. No hesitation in it.

"Trust. Sing. I am everywhere. The worst of it. All the rest too."

To be continued in Cenacle | *75* | *October 2010*

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Judih Haggai

Non-ad for buddhism

i

why not live a conscious life?
every second counts
a bubble thought
rolls into the white water
expands into rain
up before starlings
make omelet
call them to table
bushes burn
ashes scatter
next door dilemma
morning blush
lilacs flirt with sparrows
wish it was me
cocoon shock
from darkness
howl into light
frantic impressions
flowers merge with sheep
a busy day
independence day
routines abandoned
full day relax
chorus of birds
welcomes
new dawn
every morning

ii

distant cultures chant
slow scent of dawn
arise mama
children want attention
inner babies
storks spread wings
heart climbs along
full sky alert
moans of spring
feels so good
don't stop
arise dear self
lift up those heavy dreams
watch for gap
full orchestra
woodwinds and mystery
birds back in town
past says hello
all time collides
silence bows
till the crow caws
not even birds
are out of bed

iii

four a.m. peacock
shrieks in the dark
bad dream
radiant morning
lush steamy air
birds rejoice
blue-winged bird
bangs self in mirror
day after day
heavy head
worries fly into night
morning relief
cookie crumbles
nothing's forever
day breaks
wee hours
garden vibrates
stolen hug
the joy of silence
after soundman tests
disco speakers
whole lotta love
waits to be given
taker welcome
cryptic dreamtime
winding route uphill
fortress of locked doors

iv

again the neighbours
morning yells
and i'm up
young girl cries
her mother screams
it's six a.m.
No! No! No!
peacock learns english
world changes shades
lazy yawn escapes
woman examines photo
years take time
reveal the truth
invisible time passes
visibly
shatter the vision
sweep up pieces of peace
replant and wait
words of hate
gestures of compassion
all grow into trees
her words in water
emotions swim in circles
engraved daily

******

In my backyard

i

In my backyard
once upon a time
two turtles met
in my backyard

love at first knock
door rattling passion
neighbours complained

in my backyard
two neighbours scream
window rattling anger

ii

squirrels stomp in alley ashes
trash can symphonies
cluttering the morning
upstairs, a tiny room
window squeaks ajar
squinting into space
loud whisper
shut up ya damn beasts
no noise allowed
in my backyard

iii

tattooed by the bliss of butterflies
pollen struck and flecked
mother nature situation

iv

traversing oscar wilde woods
children beg for jabberwocky
plead for dr. seuss
drool over demonic doom

silly kids latch onto fantasy
filling dreams with dragon and sword
improbable forests
a tinge of satirical satyrs

in my backyard
a lone minstrel continues to sing
weaving concrete with ficus
palm tree with lusty coconuts

v

whoever thought i'd have no backyard
was right
i have no backyard
i have neighbours
screams
charcoal infringements
children on a rampage
lunatic gardeners chopping down flowers
maniacal peacocks at four a.m.
yet, my ankles are pleased
who would have thought?

******

How I wake up

i

lunatic peacock in morning freak-out
tantrumming child somewhere near
heavy machinery moving heavy metal
telephone rings from neighbours' phones
workmen appraising a tricky dilemma
doors banging, planes crop-dusting
dogs barking, cats clambering
snails sliming, rosebuds blooming
ceiling fan cooling, blankets warming
and somehow, i wake up

ii

camels lost in morning dunes
i wake up to trumpet
bedouin herds of wandering sheep
watching the sunrise

iii

a lotta bullshit goin on
a lotta reasons to cry
a lotta stupidity
a lotta lemming play
a lotta reasons to wake up
fast

iv

wake up
and smell the optimism
joy is in the heart
let it out

let it in
let it
wake up and grow

v

boundless beauty jumps outa sidewalks
squirreling brazil nuts rolling samba down my lemon grass
breweries of radiant life
hung with human sadness, but why
cry sickles are nothing but dew in search of a river
mid-day awakened

* * * * * *

G.C. Dillon

From Antarctica with Love

[Fiction]

Leslie St. John-Smythe felt each day of his eighty-one years as he trod the gangway from the Cessna seaplane. His legs ached from calcium bones to hair follicles. He held his left hand to his brown fedora to stop it from flying away in the airflow still generated by the plane's propellers. His right hand had a death-grip on a thin wooden cane. An armed member of the Strategic Air Services met him. The man held a semi-automatic rifle, its muzzle pointed downward, and a seasoned index finger straddled the half-circle of the trigger guard. *Who Dares Succeeds* was their motto—what were they daring him to do, he wondered. The soldier led him inside the nearest building.

A tall and thin Latino American lieutenant-commander with Navy Seal insignia and patches met him next. His skin was dark, his hair was short, and his speech was quick and clipped. The name of Catalano was spelled out upon his chest.

The only easy day is yesterday, their motto—would his words tell the same to St. John-Smythe?

The American officer opened a manila folder. "You come well recommended in a long-lasting, impressive career: an antiquities finder for several prestigious museums, a linguist specializing in ancient and 'dead' languages, a, umm, philologist.

"Your latest paper, I see here, was on the influence of Phoenician grammar on modern English."

"Not latest!" St. John-Smythe removed his wire-rimed glasses. "Last. I am *Professor Emeritus*, and retired. I spend most of my days tending beehives in Sussex today." He shoved the eyeglasses back upon his nose.

"Sussex? My most current intelligence places you at Yale? In Connecticut. The States."

"My ancestry is more British than the Queen's." St. John-Smythe snorted.

A young black man entered the room. He wore civilian clothes. His hair hung in dreadlocks. He nodded to the Navy Seal and held out his hand to St. John-Smythe. "Rondell Jaspers, University of Chicago. Professor, I've read your work. It's been an inspiration."

St. John-Smythe took his hand in a firm and hardy handshake.

"We found the doomed Pan-collegiate Expedition of 1929!" the man blurted out, excitedly. "Or at least one site they explored." St. John-Smythe was momentarily impressed. That scientific project had been a consortium of geologists, botanists, archaeologists, engineers, and a plethora of other fields from a dozen different colleges and universities. It had set out to do the most comprehensive study of the frozen continent of the last century, and it disappeared with nary a clue as to its dire fate.

"We have one artifact that defies analysis. It seems to have two tablets written in two scripts. I've examined it. Seen elements of Cuniform and Sanskrit. Ogham even, I think anyway. But frankly, I'm more than six feet out of my depths. Make that six fathoms.

"I believe it's alien."

"By alien, you mean—" St. John-Smythe raised a finger (not to say which) heavenward. He shook his head disapprovingly. "You have read *too* much science fiction and perhaps not *solely* the best of that particular genre."

"I said I read your *shit* so I know the symbol recognition software you pioneered. When we have to confirm fuzzy letters and numerals to utilize an Internet utility, that's helping some program of those that followed your attempt and perfected the concept to read what our ancestors wrote. So Champollion, here's *your* **Rosetta Stone**," Jaspers said, with just a smidgen of anger to his voice.

"He had Greek and a familiar form of Egyptian with which to work," St. John-Smythe groused.

"We have a network of super computers at your disposal, and a crew of programmers, for Java, C++, dotNET, whatever you want. Even cobalt," the Navy Seal reported.

"You mean COBOL, I assume; however my nascent computer-based diagnostic tools were written in Lisp!"

The Navy officer only stared at him blindly.

The professor said, "But I'm sure you do not need to find someone with a speech impediment." He smiled at a private joke. "Any adequate application developer should suffice. It's not rocket science, you know." He smiled all the broader.

"Now I assume I must trek to the permafrost and ice flows to view this marvel," St. John-Smythe said. His old bones could already feel the cold, and he instinctively stifled a shiver. His most recent bout with frostbite was when . . .

"WeBroughtItHere," the Navy Seal inconceivably quick-spoke. "We brought it here," St. John-Smythe translated. "To the Falklands, our British cousins' isles," the American finished.

St. John-Smythe thought a moment. "May I see this 'it'?"

******

Professor St. John-Smythe began his PowerPoint presentation. His laptop's display was cast upon a wide canvas screen by a small projector that had a fan that projected whirling noises more successfully than its blurry, out-of-focus image. It was the "find" found on the Southernpolar continent. St. John-Smythe clicked on his laser-pointer. He depressed a button on his keyboard and the screen repainted into a close-up of the artifact.

"Thank you all for joining me. I am here to dispel all rumours and reveal the truth—or the closest there to, which we can suss out."

There was a bee's buzz of murmuring amongst the invitation-only crowd.

"This artifact I liken to the plaque Earth sent out with *Pioneer 10*, showing two naked specimens of our species—Adam and Eve sans fig leaves. Or banana leaves I'm told our Muslim neighbours speculate. More coverage I presume."

"Good for Adam," came the voice of a commenter/heckler. Nervous laughter followed.

St. John-Smythe coughed. "We have a tale of two civilizations. One overflowing with prosperity, health, and grace. The other in ruin, poverty and starvation. And there is a suggestion as to which we can achieve . . . "

He advanced his slideshow:

TRANSMIT THIS MISSIVE TO ONE THOUSAND PLANETS AND YOUR CIVILIZATION WILL PROSPER, MULTIPLE AND FLOWER. FAILURE TO CONTINUE THIS RIGHTOUS COMMUNICATION'S PROGRESSION WILL RESULT IN CALAMITY AND BLIGHT, DESPAIR AND RUIN.

"Perhaps we need to contact NASA . . . "

* * * * * *

Ralph Emerson

Q Is for Queer

[Essay]

> "*Q* has always the sound of *k*: it is constantly followed by *u*, pronounced like *w*; and its general sound is heard in *quack, quill, queen*, &c. pronounced *kwack, kwill, kween*."
>
> —Elocution Walker, 1791.

It was the Romans who first wrote *kw* as *qu*. We write *quality* because they wrote *qualitas.* But it's not necessary. Dutchmen write *kwaliteit*, Swedes *kvalitet*, Spaniards *cualidad*. Q is a redundant letter. The reason we keep it—and use it only next to a *w* sound—is that its shape suggests the same "off-center" connotations to the eye that *kw* does to the ear. Q's hallmark in all typefaces (*q*'s too) is its off-center tail. This is our clue that Q words will be referring to off-center things, *quaint* as dotty aunts and *queer* as twisty streets: *squiggly* lines*, quavery* voices, whimsical *Quixotes*. When you see a Q, you know the road will not be straight, the person not ordinary. Phonetically, *q* is just *k.* But since language is half visual, we spell "kweer" with Q so the letter's off-center shape will help draw attention to the incipient weirdness of the *kw*.

Kawatta

Why is *kw* weird? Because W is weird. W is the sound of Water, and therefore of all wavy, twisty, non-masculine things: not *straight* boards but *warped* ones, not *straight* men but *queer* ones. W's metaphors always play on physical twistiness—slanted, bent, curled, rotated—and for some reason the illusion of twistiness is enhanced when W is preceded by *k.* Merely "weerd" is not quite "kweer," and "wacky" is not quite "kwirky." The brain gives *kw* names to literal twists and later redefines these names figuratively. For instance, the oldest sense of *quirk* in the *OED* is a "sudden twist, turn, or curve; esp. in drawing"; but now we think of a *quirk* mostly as a figurative eccentricity of *character*. Same in Japanese. The literal *kw* verb for 'swerve' or 'change into' is *kawaru*, from which we get the abstract adjective *kawatta*, meaning 'different, weird'.

One rich source of twisty *kw*-like words is the Kwakiutl tongue of British Columbia.[1] Here are five verbs: turn over is *khwela*, turn right-side up is *Gwe'sta*, bend over is *gwana,* wrap or twist is *qwequla,* and twist off is *qwapa.* Now, compare: Who's *Quasimodo*? The hunchback of Notre Dame—physically twisted. And *Quilp*? The really nasty dwarf who's the villain of Dickens's *Old Curiosity Shop*—physically *and* morally twisted.

These Q names are hardly exceptional. Nabokov tipped his hat to Quilp by calling *Lolita*'s villain Clare *Quilty*. The ghostly servant who menaced the kids in *The Turn of the Screw*

[1] My Kwakiutl examples ("quock-yootle") are from the vocabularies in Franz Boas's *Ethnology of the Kwakiutl* in the 1913-14 report of the Bureau of American Ethnology. I've simplified his spellings, using *kh* for *x*, apostrophe for a glottal stop, *gy* for post-dotted palatal *g*, capital *G* for under-dotted uvular *g*, plain *q* for occasional fortis *q!*, and so on.

was Peter *Quint*. Joyce Carol Oates invented a pedophile called *Quentin* P., and the whip-happy schoolmaster in Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* was Wackford *Squeers*. Real life has its Q villains too. Vidkun *Quisling* gave us a new word for traitor when he sold out Norway to the Nazis. Would he have done it if he'd been named Hansen instead?

Evil or not, all Q figures are strange. Don *Quixote* is *quixotic*, Captain *Queeg* in *The Caine Mutiny* is downright crazy, and *Queequeg* in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* is an "outlandish" South Seas cannibal.

Queer

When we look at Queequeg more closely, we notice that his "peculiarities" include a "*queer* round figure" tattooed on his arm, and that he works on an old whaling ship called the *Pequod*. Melville knew his Q's. The few paragraphs that introduce the *Pequod* in Chapter 16 catalogue every aspect of her age, oddness, and crookedness with an astounding collection of printed Q's, *q*'s, and *w*'s that wiggle across the page like frisky water-snakes. I'm sure Melville was no more than half conscious of putting all those Q's in his manuscript, yet it's exactly in the inspired and mostly *unconscious* repetitions of such poetic passages that we can most clearly glimpse a letter's soul on display.

Anchored at dockside, the *Pequod* is a "*quaint* craft" with weathered sides and "*wrinkled*" decks, although she masks the "*grotesqueness*" of her "*antiquities*" with an agreeable "*quaintness*" of decoration. Hoping for work, the narrator steps onto her "*quarter*-deck" and spies there "a *strange* sort of tent, or rather *wigwam*." This "*queer* tenement" shelters the ship's owner, who is seated inside "on an old-fashioned oaken chair, *wriggling* all over with curious carving." The owner is a "*Quaker*," a "*Quakerish* Nantucketer." And where's the *Pequod*'s captain? Home sulking, says the owner: "He's a *queer* man, Captain Ahab"!

Did Melville mean that Ahab was gay? No. Melville was writing in 1850, and *queer* was not used for gay until the early 1900s (and not politicized in that meaning until the Eighties). In his day, *queer* had no sexual connotations at all; it simply meant 'peculiar', just as it had when it first appeared in Scotland around 1500. Yet even before it acquired its modern sexual sense, *queer* was still the most emblematic Q word in English. In Francis Grose's slang dictionary of 1811, for example, almost half the Q entries (23 of 52) deal with the word *queer* in its underworld sense of bad or worthless: *queer bung* for an "empty purse," *queer cove* for a "rogue," *queer as Dick's hatband* for 'feeling sick'. The word shows up again in Jack Schaefer's *Company of Cowards,* a story about a unit of disgraced Civil War officers. When a "wag in Washington" names the group Company Q, the narrator remarks: "That letter, I take it from his sarcastic comments, stands for *queer, quixotic.*" And since 2004, we have had a cheerfully perverse Broadway musical called *Avenue Q*.

Yet English has no corner on *kw*-style queerness. The sort of guy we might call a *queer fish* (not gay, but strange) can be termed a *kawarimono* in Japanese or a *Querkopf* in German. In fact, most dictionaries trace our *queer* to that same German word *quer*, meaning 'oblique, crosswise'. The *OED* disputes this, saying the words' dates and senses don't match well enough for them to be related. That may be true, but they're clearly on the same team, and it's a big, international team. You need a word for crosswise? German *quer*, Kwakiutl *khwal-*. You want strange? English *queer*, Japanese *kawatta*, Chinese *guai* ("kwy"). Who says they have to be related? They're all typical *kw* words, and any one of them could have bubbled up from the

collective unconscious as soon as it was needed.

Queens

All the *qu* or *kw* words above are governed by their W's. They get their twisty meanings from that letter's wavy, watery nature; and given that W means WATER, it inevitably suggests Woman as well. Many *kw* words reflect this too. In Nigerian Tiv, woman is *kwase*. In Algonquian Fox, spoken near Chicago, woman was *-hkwawa-*. In the related languages spoken near Boston, the same word appeared as *skwa*, which early English colonists spelled *squaw*. In prehistoric Europe, woman was *g^{w}en-*, whence the Greek *gynē* in *gynecologist* 'woman's doctor', as well as the modern Swedish *kvinna* 'woman', and our own word *queen.*

Actually, we used to have two of these words: *queen* for an exalted woman, and *quean*, originally pronounced "kwen," for wenches and harlots. (Japanese has *kawatake* 'harlot'.) For centuries, *quean* referred only to female sluts, but in the early 1900s, it became gay slang for a male slut. Since it already had its modern sound, it was rewritten in the 1920s as *queen,* which looks like . . . *queer,* whose gay meaning was going mainstream at about the same time. Perhaps sensing that the letter Q was acquiring a fresh significance, the future "queer icon" Denis Pratt soon adopted the Q name he later made famous: *Quentin* Crisp.

The gay meanings are a backhanded tribute to W's femininity. In fact, every word we've looked at is a tribute to W. Our tradition of using an inseparable *qu*-for-*kw* spelling has mixed up Q and *w* so thoroughly in our minds that we can hardly conceive of a Q without a *w*. How do we say *Qantas*, the airline? Like *Kwantas*, even though *Qantas* has no *u*.

To write about the letter Q as we use it in the West is necessarily to write about *kw*, a pairing that human languages use as a kind of super-W, a super-twisty way of opening a word. Our traditional *qu* spelling artfully employs the visual twist of Q's curlicue to advertise the aural twistiness that really comes from the W—a queer and clever way of giving the redundant Q a useful job. At the center of the letter's thoughts has long been that word *queer*, even before the twentieth century funneled all its twistiness into the sexual meanings—bent, kinky—for which its initial Q is now the international symbol. Q power! A very new twist in the letter's story; yet in its twistiness, really very traditional.

Quack

What do kids think Q stands for? Without an obvious answer like Apple or Elephant, one children's book suggests, "Quiz and question start with Q." While I was writing this article, I happened to see an exhibit of illustrated alphabets drawn by local children, and yes, several of them illustrated Q with a question mark. That shows good intuition, because our squiggly-looking ? actually comes from the tiny *q*-over-*o* sign that Latin scribes used to draw after a *quaestio* or question.

Christina Rossetti had another answer: "Q is a Quail, quick-chirping at morn." And wouldn't you know, several kids in the exhibit drew quails! That's good intuition too, because Q's old friend *kw* is a longtime specialist in bird noises. *Quail* is from Latin *quaccula*, little quacker. (*Quack* doctors "quack" about their secret remedies.) Kwakiutl bird-names quack too: heron is *qwaq*, sea-petrel *qwe-qwe-qwe,* raven *Gwakh.* Does that remind you of English *squawk?* And does *qwesa* remind you of *squeeze?* It should; they mean the same thing. Kwakiutl

q(w) and English *sq(u)* both stand for big hungry Mouths that can suddenly squawk *or* squeeze. When jaws snap shut in Kwakiutl, they go *qa!*

The difference is that a Kwakiutl *q* isn't a *k* in disguise; it's a wholly different sound we don't have in English, the same throaty sound that Arabs use in words like *Iraq*. It's somewhat like *k*, but more guttural. To pronounce it, you have to get your tongue further back in your mouth: say *ka*, notice where your tongue is, and then bunch it up a little further back and try again: that's *qa.* If it sounds truly croaky, like a real crow's caw, you're doing it right. In fact, the Arabic word for crow is *qaq.*

Why is this important? Well, in the early history of our alphabet, that's the sound Q stood for, a uvular [q]. It wasn't redundant or decorative like an English Q, and it wasn't always tied up with *u* or *w*. It was an independent sound. Because it's still heard in modern languages like Kwakiutl and Arabic, nineteenth-century linguists resurrected the ancient value of the letter Q so they could transcribe those languages more precisely. For instance, the Arabic book we traditionally spell *Koran* is really the *Qur'an*, and you won't be surprised to learn that it's a Mouth word: *qiri* is Arabic for recite, and *Qur'an* is literally 'recitation'; just as the Kwakiutl Q words *qatapa* and *qwegya'l* have the appropriately mouthy meanings 'quarrel' and 'cry'.

Technically speaking, [q] is a "back" consonant, one produced in the back of the mouth. Back consonants typically designate either Mouths-and-biting or Skin-and-cutting, the two major categories of meaning that we explored in detail under the C & G essays in previous issues of *The Cenacle*.[2] The great exception is illustrated in this article: when a back consonant is co-opted by W, it gets twisty (*queer*). When it's on its own, however, or able to subordinate its W, a back consonant will usually revert to type and either get mouthy (*squawk*) or talk about skin, as in Japanese *kawa* 'skin' and Kwakiutl *qula* 'scratch'. That's what Q really wants to do.

Quaestio

How did Q lose itself? Latin got hold of it. Since no Western language has a uvular [q], the Romans didn't need it for that. But they did need a symbol for their labial [k^w], a special *k* sound that they pronounced with pursed lips. To write it, they borrowed the Etruscan Q and combined it with *u,* so they could tell *qualitas* apart from *calidus.* By the end of the Roman Empire, this [k^w] had changed into the modern [kw] sound we use in *quality*, and since no one had the heart to get rid of its peculiar *qu* spelling, it's still with us, its values changing from one border to the next. German *qu* stands for [kv], and the modern French and Spanish *qu* of *mystique* and *mosquito* is just a very awkward way to spell plain [k].

Fed up with this kind of thing, the Dutch and Scandinavians finally dropped Q altogether, substituting phonetic spellings like *kwaliteit*. Finding the letter up for grabs, newly reformed languages like Albanian and Chinese promptly took it home and put it to local uses. (Chinese currently uses it for a *ch* sound; the old *Ch'ing* Dynasty is now spelled *Qing*.) Meanwhile, the original uvular Q lives on in Middle Eastern languages like Persian and Arabic and distant tongues like Kwakiutl.

Although we think of Q as irremediably twisty, when it was invented almost four thousand years ago, it wasn't a twisty letter at all. It's always had its O-like loop, but its tail went straight down until the Romans redrew it on a slant. The equivalent Hebrew letter qoph

[2] See "C & G: Gobbling Gutturals," *Cenacle* | 67 | December 2008, and "C & G Again: Gleaming Skin," *Cenacle* | 68 | April 2009.

is written ק, and the even older Phoenician qoph looked like a female sign ♀ without its crossbar. Like all the early letters, it was a picture; and the Phoenician kids who sat learning their letters in ancient gardens knew exactly what *qoph* meant and what its picture showed: the eye of a needle.

A tiny little mouth, and very cute.

* * * * * *

Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Many Musics
[Sixth Series]

"Black ink. Psychedelia.
Try to love the world near & far."

xxxi. High Porch

I will sing for you. It's what I've come here to do.
I will teach you to sing too, whatever kind your song.
Now you will sing for me. We'll twine our songs, & listen.

******

xxxii. Harvard Square in Spring

I think how the stone tables & cyberspace cross,
& the old man guitarist of this square
passed by laughing virgins with tinkling trinkets,
& the moon above half-noticing the few dramas
& many blooms below. I look around this
courtyard & feel old & young & perplexed
by living's changing years. No secret to noticing
a pair of shapely chattering legs nor the
shallow breathing of the faces above their game.
A wish to remember, finely and fully,
& then ask, what else? What tonight? What the morrow?
Living things move restless, quick and slow,
cross the planet, dead ones at their ease.

******

xxxiii. Consideration

I left in a hurry, tired & hungry. A song
 to chase, to make new, to find & lose
& find again. I became afraid, & age set in.
 Pushed back, one bloom, another. Returning
still hungry, less fear, many musics, many trees.

******

xxxiv. Amongst Old Stones

Men depart this world free, yet wish a marker
 of their visit, a widow, a stripling, an etched
chip of rock to note their bones. The poor will
 take a few inches, the kings a foot or two,
or six, as though the earth receives in greater
 & lesser order by purse & speech & polity's
dirty divisions. Chaotic bird-noise here, this green,
 green day. A siren rises among blarings & shouts,
distant music of a parade & the spring rain
 of near church bells harking the new hour. We walk
quietly amongst these old stones, taking our notes,
 leaving our trinkets for the heroes, nodding
without knowing why at the graves of babes,
 & loyal wives, & dear servants without surname.
The trees stand, benign titans, their young leaves
 a bidding to make the world new again today,
their roots twisted mildly among the departed,
 bringing the news from above, when any
to know. Their world still.

******

xxxv. Leaving West

How glorious, how high, how dreams
will drive a man to chase a thought,
a sweet ass, a promise spiking his mind.
Years, the world moves & moves again,
& how does the hunger keep changing masks
without diminish? Nothing to heat the blood
but move & move again, & new marvel
at the animal heart's ways of remembering it
all while keeping hope's claws out for next bright ray.

******

xxxvi. Anniversary

Moving many pens along the years,
in distant rooms with strangest aches,
a heart wilting & blooming again in song,
among hotel armchairs where talk of
markets nears the erotic. Pause. Sweep
around. Dimming winter light outside, or
snow upon the glass roof, sometimes sweating
rage & want on the many sheets, & no why
but strange pleasures salve strange aches,
& each new pen uncapped with old hunger,
& the world is strangely beautiful at best,
& language clumsy reveals a moment,
the passage through, its striver, this hour's sure going.

******

xxxvii. Mind Flowers

One of the mystics approaches with the truth,
 not sure if a book or a glow, I back away,
he smiles, nods. "When you're ready."
 I look around the night, how this springtime
northern city has such late, late dusks.
 On this street, still open, an old barber shop,
an Afghani restaurant. Several art galleries.
 The cafe I am saying goodbye to tonight.

I look at the mystic, & nod. He smiles,
 moves near, touches my shoulder. Points.
Where? "There." Where? "And there too."
 Then he does a little dance. Nods again.
"That's it?" "What else?" Gives me a push to go.

******

xxxviii. Nothing Lasts . . .

There was an hour I'd like to tell you
about, because I believe you have had
these hours too, & they are few, &
they do not last. Nobody noticed us smiling
through these streets, we knew something,
it was between us, passed back & forth,
a fire, a glow, a light, street after street.

I think we must have sat down eventually,
it was getting night. There had been so many
words, there always are, for while
the loneliness itself has no words, not a one,
we spend our lives describing it, one to another,
& in our songs, our books, our high noise.

It trailed away, in lingers, in waves,
in dreams, then to now, & sometimes
gentle hits a wall, or a new face, a melody,
then a rhythm, then your face, your every face,
& it all explodes again, a rageless, freaking, human love.

******

xxxix. . . . but Nothing is Lost

Feel the great miracle of doubt & love,
it hurries bodies home in the rain,
to whatever awaits, get there, get there,

get there. The books on the shelves,
each one a try at luring a truth into cage,
call it a philosophy, call it a song, sing it,

sing it, so many hours to it, singing,
watching civilizations raise & decay
by their songs, looking forward or remembering,

& what if this time I simply fall back into
my couch's cushions, & stop. Simply stop.
No movement. A barking. Distant lawnmower.

Begin to move again, not sure how, because it hurts
not to, hurts, & so move again, move anew,
with doubt & love, always, moving again. Better.

******

xl. Coffee Time

Someone said you'd like it there, years ago,
& excited I came by streetcar to this
cafe's armchair, this one, its predecessor,
oh I was a lorn, ragged soul but could
always smile at another's freak try in
explaining love or the world. I entered
the caverns here & felt safe for awhile,
hours of safety in a life disintegrating,
coming here became precious, conflation
of place with sanctuary, & I came
often. Then I left a long while, remembering.

When I returned, my hand its better grip on
the wheel, it still mattered, many more times
I came & brought my suffering & my lights both,
like old, I kept it sanctuary in my heart.

And tonight I part you, how to tell this not
in mere sadness but in song, how to tell
what leaving sanctuary is like, this for another,
& yet another in the length of years,
& the idea of sanctuary is addictive, I confess,
in another's arms, in music, & here, now,
these going hours, cement floor by painted wall by
open door by the breaths & ink I leave here with love.

******

xli. Strange Pleasures

Blooms wild into the world,
 meet its heavy press with new music,
salve by touch, by question, by the force
 of strange new pleasures.

Does the eventual mask grow from
 within, or by contact with the world's
hungry decay, its terror that the years
 have taught nothing but survival
hardens the will, & the air itself feeds
 on hearts sheathed for dance not war?

******

xlii. Here is Shorthand

Black cows riddle the manless scrub 'scape.
No sight of the hands that built the fences
or put down the tracks or raised up
the electrical poles. Just black cows
nudging wearily for food, shitting every few
steps, fattening for plates on unseen tables.

******

xliii. Road Diary #13: Night Paving

Lightning slits apart the hour's
dark flesh, exposing old moments
drying & too sweet to lightly tongue
for a memory. I look for your face
with the next flash but find nothing
but the exploding torrent that is sentiment,
& a line of restless cars damning up
the road as crews furiously repair
or defend the insoluble.

******

xliv. Fate Isn't What We're Up Against

Many musics, wake, blink, still the world.
 Still no answers, disappearing between thighs,
through shutting doors, & the hour gone.
 And the year gone. Red. Green. Yellow.
One's soul divines in measuring one memory by
 another, & the music in distortion & forgetfulness itself.

Many musics, some culled from the hours slept,
 against an empty wallet, a crushed heart,
the heat, the cold, the hard thrashings of animal
 among animal in this half-awakened
functionality. Fate isn't what we're up
against so much as me against you.

Many musics, uplift still in song with those
 who praise to be alive. I praise, & I praise,
I do. But then restless with the night's lamps
 of both iron & fire. Restless, because blood flows,
it does not perch & idle. Restless because
 why all that pain if not distilled to tonight's better song?

******

xlv. Beware & Be Aware

I look amongst my selves to be certain,
 to cohere & contact the light.
When not in concert at least I find instinct to carry through.

******

xlvi. Stoned Immaculate

Romance was such a drunken vexation
 that no amount of lecture on pheromone
& evolution could have persuaded me
 from dogging the secret of her scent in the shadows.

******

xlvii. Roll the Bones

I've learned to see luck as the charming
 fluid one can attempt to seduce the world
by, with a medicine man's grin & an eye on the door.

******

xlviii. No One is in Control

I've long not studied the brick beneath
 my feet, how deep it binds, with nearby tree,
to the earth below, in every season,
 the slapdash ways years pass for men,
under foot there is brick, root, earth.

I reck the world's history is not the same
 as men's, charting change with less dissension.
What world without flow? Yet men would jerk
 this way & that, a symphony of bolts
on how & why & what next & what might be.
 Or blood & conquest over these same things.

In returning to my old home, a wish to gather
 concert & conflict both, assail them by
the bricks below & their history of men,
 & the roots below that & what strives
to be discerned common among all.
 What beats, what breathes, closer than a word.

******

xlix. Beneath Tamarack Again

The passage of time is measured in the mind,
 measured in the mind, & also the body.
Measured in the body, & where the blossoms go,
 & last year's endless snow. The snow
in the skies, too, ancient lights & their message
 to keep moving & keep shining & no,
you will not elude time, in your mind or your body,
 but behold about you the rest of the world,
its passing just like you! You smile, you age,
 you creak, these stars might say but, long
after your last, you shine to some future amazement.

******

l. In a Bookstore

I watched her shadow-dark hair swing from side
 to side across her half-nude back as she chattered
  softly to another, & thought of other things—

Turned to the half-shaded window with its view of
 drizzled shaking leaves, & forgot her,
  & thought of other things—

I looked down to my journal & read of two writers
 wrangling the words "empathy" & "sympathy" between
  them, & forgot the rainy leaves & thought again
   of other things—

Her hands reminded me, as they tossed & flew,
 a glimpse of her garishly large hoop earrings
  made me wonder their purpose—& I turned back
   wondering to the leaves & how they live their lives in the air—

Coming back to the page I discovered my two writers
 now in agreement: empathy & sympathy
  are one thing, & run through all that lives—
 looking up I saw the girl leaving with her friend,
swinging hair & blinking earrings & half naked back
 & all—suddenly there were other faces &
  noises around me, photos of sleeping or dead things
   on the wall, countless books with their arguing hints,
& a new-struck faith that a million missing things still could be found.

******

li. Some of What

The way is dis-illusion, & the lesson
 that what conceals shapes in the light,
by the lights shared by men & skies,
 the lights grown up over years, centuries,
shapes a man's mind even before he grasps
 he possesses such a thing, wonders what it is,
or why. The way is dis-illusion, to feel it
 deep & hard every hour, plain or golden,
feel it all hard as each beat forces a rush
 of living blood, as each breath renews
& opens, every one of us a pore for breath,
 for light, for each other's little reasons
& greater fears. The way is dis-illusion
 for all claims to heart, to land, to coin,
come to dust, & yet tonight we each & many
 claim a little still, & claim a little more.

******

lii. An Off Night

Only disbelieve in nothing & the world
 may move a little your way. Let a god in,
an angry one, a gentler one, the one
 who sings of illusions & the one who says
the songs are illusions themselves.

Only disbelieve in nothing & see what
 turns in another's hand, what art he carries
to earn his coin, what secret art he carries
 otherwise. There won't be the reward from
the fist or the master's flick, but something else.

Only disbelieve in nothing until it shows
 behind the refrain, the rhymes for slaving
folk, the grit & frown that keep men
 burrowed close together, closer than a thought,
closer than a sniff. Limbs & mind bound, disbelieve.

Only disbelieve in nothing & mercy
 you are one of us. And mercy will you suffer,
and mercy will you sing! Only disbelieve
 in nothing & one day your hand will
no longer make a fist. And open. And open. And open.

******

liii. Politik

Would a king or preacher know your
 private most maps, run light & fingers over
its terrains, its crevasses. But no god's man
 knows nor state functional. Where you yearn,
where you years later still bleed, or laugh.
 The hour when concession & kindness
exchanged masks. The hour whose memory
 tendered you for years. Devotion is not
for subtlety & obedience does not have shades.
 In brief, it's yours, the complex carcass
of your life, save for the numbers prayed
 to obeisance, the child's wonder & anarchy kept close.

******

liv. Romance

I wonder what most of you ever offered
 but a tapping foot, a giggle, a touch of skin,
& promises not possible to keep, if ever intended.

******

lv. Spiritual

There's that sound in the room—
  after the spiritual's been sung—
a breath within no breast—
 it was here—did you feel it?
& then the slightest noise—
 & it's like a relief—
for none of us & this hour can be that holy—
 can be that holy—none of us—

******

lvi. Zombie Love Song

Look at the lights, watch the faces,
how many years collected in doing this,
looking, watching, wishing, wanting,
hungering better explanation of a tight ass,
the brutal ways of men, the spiraling
instants of joy, reached, yowled for,
can't hold on, tried, ride so long,
tried, look at the lights, watch the faces.

The tangle of men as the flesh & the heart
each make a bid, looking, watching,
wishing, wanting, a suffering of mind,
of body, of something else, half-sung
dream of another world like this one
but kinder, questions of coin & market
of less matter than who will tender you tonight
& how will the morrow 'merge from your dreams?

The lights, the faces, the tangle of suffering
unsolved & ecstasy too much a novelty to hold
dear to days. Too many myths, too many gods
to parse the pain into tomes & laws of the land.
Tonight I sing to the creatures of this world,
what more possible? What beauty awaits?
What have we to fear in each other?
What strikes truer than kindness & love?

******

lvii. Not Alone

Trying to deduce from history
 to this moment, idea of tree to this
shading oak, what the great poets
 croon of love & what this live blood
in me wants. The music of voices,
 growls, growing things, an insect I watched
smash my walls till it fell. The formula,
 better than an old thought called God,
the one will please & sate you, push you,
 out & up, down & deep, through yourself,
till we meet somewhere else that resembles
 tonight but you cannot remember
your name or path, I cannot remember my own,
 & we smile without history or consequence.

******

lviii. Come In Me

To distinguish by flesh & name,
& to discriminate, & divide, & divide again,
shape words to weather & its gods,
awl the path for better & lesser love,
& what songs to sing, what heroes do,
& confine to the edges some thoughts,
the daring, the renegade, the forbidden,
cloak dreams in the motley of fools,
give a nod to some desires, a cell to others,
to erect in tome & human structure an answer
to this world's mysteries, encircle the chaos
& call it tamed, weight each heart
with myths of expectation, a punishment,
some reward, point far to explain here,
build a high, hard world of distrust for
simple instincts, gut the child's wish
to share & wonder, flood each heart's beast
with doubt, with restlessness, with half-said
faith that well-spent coins sate wordless surges
of loins, look at this world & say with me:
what else? what better? what more, & why not?

******

lix. Memory & Prelude

I woke this morning, early, writhing,
 a dream's lingering claws, stroked,
squeezed, & no more sleep, not even close,
 what was it? Not a woman, known or stranger,
nor a man, animal, god. A memory, old one,
 released last night when I found a high school
essay. In a pile, a glance, a nod, none else.
 But enough. A teacher I don't remember but
he liked me. Those years weren't pretty. He graded
 me high, smiled, taught me with a worn man's
hope that someone listened. All I wanted to do
 was fuck a cheerleader. Or the poet girl
I adored. Or quite a few others. No why
 in it. The rest of my grades made nobody
proud, nobody smile, hope. I skipped school
 for the library, to write a paper on my
favorite books, the ones with no money &
 a laughing kindess for all. I wrote & I wrote,
then typed & typed. He smiled, hoped, gave me
 the best grade he could but knew it wasn't
good enough. I wanted to fuck her, & fuck her,
 & fuck her. Skipped school, hid, read,
wrote. Then one day came & suddenly I
 remembered. This morning, no more sleep.

I had a friend, his name was John,
he was a rough piece of work. He liked me
too, & it mattered more. Here's why. One day
he saw me getting pushed around &
stepped in. I didn't have many friends,
none like him. His act, his word, protected
me. I didn't know how to fight any more
than I knew how to fuck. Nobody had
taught me. I knew how to hide, elude, get
through the day, keep my thoughts my
own, close. I don't know why he liked me,
or stepped in. I had nothing to offer me.
He could have taught me how to fight & fuck,
maybe, I would return & ask: "How do
you do it? Use your body's power, its want,
its will? Show me." Maybe he would have.
What did I have for him? It was another day's
answer & maybe this is what wouldn't
let me sleep this morning, what drove me
from bedroom to living room couch.
Is this a lesson, something like that?
I don't think so. Or a lesson thus spoke:
shit happens. All the time. Maybe something
else. You see, he asked me a question,
this friend, John. And I answered because
I had no friends like him & no cheerleader pussy
& no skills to fight, make way in the world.

He was in the hallway, taking a make-up
test in the class where I'd given the teacher
hope. I came out to go to the bathroom
& he asked me to help him. The teacher
called it cheating later, when he caught me.
I suppose so. The teacher's heart broke
& he crushed my grade down low. Probably
my friend outright failed. I went to college
& he probably didn't. We were different kinds
of failures. I could contrive a sentence &
write it out. He could beat up a fellow &
then lay his cheerleader girlfriend
out smooth, give it to her twice hard, make
her moan, writhe, cheer, forget awhile.
And what was all this for? Maybe all these
years later I simply look back & wonder
how little connection any of us made then,
& how this not-much truth is so often true.
That hour, helping, cheating, hoping, breaking,
it passed, passed long, long ago. Nobody
left from it. Just an old sheaf of typed pages
I found yesterday, what was called onion
skin back then. A grade scrawled over it,
the dead bones of a gone pride. A breakable
certainty in me about the world years back
replaced by a working doubt. The universal
flow collects it all, whatever its seeming worth.

******

lx. Psychedelic Dream (vi)

"There is nothing. There is always nothing."
—Pablo Neruda, "Past"

Dream is destiny. It became a question
 of the questions & what musics in it.
Stop. Or at least pause. What a thing singing
 anyway but a nose into the wind, what news
there, the bits sayable, pretty with effect.
 Pause. Or at least slow. The rhythms
are always there, what the wind's shaking,
 how the sea talks in tides to shore.

What were the questions? Who will love me?
 Who will fuck me? Who will sing my bones?
I think it now, tonight, more a question
 of who wouldn't. Most of the seething world,
& the lost idea of god. I still speak to the stars.
 It's just now I hear their like cries in return.

Dream is destiny. How close a truth to heart's,
 how navigable those words? I chased them,
without pause, or slow, it's what blood cries
 to do. Chase!

What to chase? A woman, of course.
 A muse, a mate. Calls to full moon
over desert temples: let me find her.
 Let me name her. Let me sing her.

What then? Dream is destiny? A good question,
 the right one? I run with the elixirs & smoke,
the try to clasp cock & starlight in song,
 I'm not alone, this is what men do.
Chase hard, in full moons, & high tides, &
 with empty pockets & tiring bones. Chase,
& chase, til the breath & beats give out.

Better question: what until then? I don't know.
 The songs wait ascending staircases I know
but may see differently this time, in lights
 reminding me, the rubble of sobering mornings,
the glints unspent by word in chords, & curves, & green.

But: there is nothing. There is always nothing.
And: dream is destiny. And maybe one too many
fine asses chatting agreeably with a sweet.
My hungers & my questions are the same
as ever & do not answer & do not comfort.

Dream isn't destiny. Destiny contrives between
the songs, in the books one sets on a shelf,
the photograph carried in a pocket.
In the wordless & waiting hours of even
the most wordful & aware. Destiny knits
these hours without name, the gestures
most unnoticed. The breathing between laughter.

Not, perhaps then, a question of the questions
or the music. Maybe a fear that,
sans the questions, why the mind,
why the press moving flesh, what the hustle
of men among men? Otherwise loud beasts
playing elaborate polluting games to urge
doubtful urges & claim an old story for why.

What music to do with the least, the hungriest
of hours, bent half-smiling for another's nod?
What music grips the knees, compacts
the loins, tells better than a headline
what next move in the dance? What music
true to the awkward shiftings of the dance?

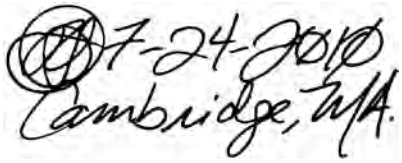
I ask & still, because there's music &
a waiting song in the worst of it.
Because the invisible threads the gossip
& deep magic hurries kings too.

I ask, by singing, mull traffic for a code
in its clashing glares. I ask, by singing,
because I believe the green in men may
still abide. The machines may in most futile
years to come simple point a hand to a hand
& say: clasp. Hold. Learn. I ask, by singing,
because I know none other path, & fail
to despair finally while a pen in my hand.

Singing, to myself, to you, to the world
in this way or another. Because dream
isn't destiny. Because the path told of
later traced uncut through deepest woods
& tangled hours. Singing because there is breath
coming, & again, & the beat to push,
& the mind to trouble over the why.

No questions. No destiny. No whys.
Singing because the air tonight
is soft & biteless, & the full moon
is teasing a hint like always. The earth
below recalls her fallen & still fruits
by spring in reply. The scents of blooms &
decay mixture hungrily everywhere.

What musics in it? I went looking for
the questions & these are what I found.



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Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution

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Jim DeKorne

Psychedelics and Alchemy

[Essay]

Excerpts from a talk given at the Mind States conference, Berkeley, California on November 23, 1997, published in The Entheogen Review*, Winter Solstice, 1997.*

I believe that shamanism is based upon a gnosis that most humans have forgotten. This gnosis is that we are eternal, multidimensional entities living an illusory mortal existence in three-dimensional space. The human birthright is to regain this gnosis and learn how to function fully in both physical and metaphysical realms—for our own good, that of our species, and of the planet itself. Powerful forces are now pushing those of us ready for it to a full realization of these powers.

Mircea Eliade has said that shamanism dependent upon psychotropic substances is a decadent form; Terence McKenna asserts that psychedelic shamanism is the only legitimate kind. I want to offer an integration which honors the truth of both positions. Psychedelics, or entheogens, are extremely valuable tools in the Great Work of Transformation, but they are often abused by those who don't understand how to use them. I think the reason our culture has such substance abuse problems can be directly traced to the fact that we have forgotten our shamanic roots; not only do we lack contemporary models for the use of consciousness-altering catalysts, but we have a taboo against knowing ourselves. We no longer even possess clear structures for how to know ourselves. Let's begin by looking at that.

Psychedelics have the capacity to both unify and fragment consciousness. Most people who have experimented with these substances with any frequency know that the highest gnosis that psychedelics offer is that "we are all one." Our consciousness has been unified: we know the whole. This is the state of awareness variously called "satori," "samadhi," "nirvana," etc. in Eastern religions. The gurus tell us that anything less than this state of unified awareness is illusion.

The opposite of wholeness of course, is separation from the whole: we see component parts rather than their integration. Such perception on psychedelics typically evokes a fear response: awareness sees itself as a discrete entity surrounded by other entities regarded as "other," as "not-me." The "wholeness" of the observer is challenged because that which is "not-me" is always a potential enemy. This stems from our life-long experience as differentiated beings living in a multiverse of other differentiated beings; fear of others is a legitimate response for any organism living on a planet where predator-and-prey relationships determine survival.

Both realities are true: we are all one but we are also all separate. Nevertheless, the first gnosis is a good deal more pleasant than the second. This unique quality of psychedelic drugs to reveal both realities of existence suggests a comparison with one of the fundamental secrets of Alchemy:

Solve et coagula, et habebis magisterium.
(Dissolve and bind, and you will have the magistery.)
A magistry (a masterpiece) is an alchemically exalted preparation which is always prepared from a whole, e.g., a medicinal plant. The preparation first requires the separation of specific constituents, after which they are purified and again combined.
—*Manfred Junius,* The Practical Handbook of Plant Alchemy*, Healing Arts Press, Rochester, VT 1979, 1985, 1993*.

Anyone who has studied alchemy knows that the true goal of the Work was not the literal transmutation of "lead into gold" of popular folklore, but the transformation of the alchemist's consciousness into a state of enlightenment, which is to say, a state of unified perception. The "dissolve and bind" formula, when applied to human awareness, means that one differentiates (dissolves, separates) all the disparate aspects of one's personality, purifies them, then recombines them into a "masterpiece," a transcendent state of consciousness. This is an exact formula for the attainment of enlightenment, and knowing that, we can use psychedelics consciously as catalysts for inner work.

In psychological terms, one analyzes (*solve*) one's complexes, then recombines and synthesizes them (*coagula*) into a harmonious whole. In typical practice, you begin by coming to terms with your early childhood; then you recognize how your complexes inhibit your freedom; having navigated those labyrinths, you get a handle on your life work: you contact your essence and reconcile your ego illusions with the intent of your authentic self, your essence. And so on.

Unfortunately, many people get no further than blaming mom and dad for their dysfunctions. That's just the beginning of the journey. Until you can authentically purify (which is to say, reconcile and integrate) those forces in your psyche, you're still stuck in the first phase of the Work.

Analysis and synthesis, then, is a universal formula for completing the Great Work. It goes without saying that this formula is deceptively easy to understand, but extremely difficult to accomplish. (That's why they call it the "Work"—it is work: it is the heaviest labor you'll ever undertake!) In plain English, the alchemical canon says: take it apart, purify the parts, then put them back together again. If you succeed at this, the final whole will be a totally different substance from the whole with which you started.

I am reminded of a Zen proverb:

Before I was enlightened, mountains were mountains and rivers were rivers.
While on the path to enlightenment, mountains were no longer mountains and rivers were no longer rivers.
After I was enlightened, mountains were again mountains and rivers were again rivers.

This is just another way of describing the solve et coagula formula of alchemy. First you deconstruct the mountains and rivers (which is to say, your everyday reality) to know them in their substance, then you put them back together again, purified of illusion. Actually, "you" don't do this; your essence does it for you—all that is required of the ego is disciplined cooperation, which is to say, devotion to the Work.

Another example: In 1846, when Henry Thoreau was at Walden Pond there were millions of humans on the planet who lived lives as simple as he did. In those days, any peasant in what today we call the "Third World" lived outwardly no differently than Thoreau did. An anthropologist from another planet comparing only their outward lifestyles would see no differences between them: they both chopped wood, they both carried water. Yet Thoreau was living in a much different reality than, say, the average Russian peasant. For both of them, mountains were mountains and rivers were rivers, but Thoreau's mountains and rivers were of a different order of being-ness. That's because he had attained gnosis: he understood both the forest and the trees which made it up.

A verse from the *Tao Te Ching* illustrates this idea perfectly:

Oftentimes, one strips oneself of passion
In order to see the Secret of Life;
Oftentimes, one regards life with passion,
In order to see its manifest forms.

The "Secret of Life" mentioned here is the gnosis that we are all one, that the highest reality is unitive. In alchemical terms, we cannot really know that unity, we cannot have true gnosis, until we have experienced all the "manifest forms"—only then can we claim to truly know the whole. The simple peasant, living in a state of nature, can be said to know a kind of wholeness, but it is an innocent, an unconscious state. To know any whole completely it must be fragmented so that its component parts can be understood. During this phase of the Work, by definition, mountains and rivers cannot be whole entities.

Psychedelics, because of their capacity to fragment and unify the psyche, are extremely useful tools for furthering the Work, but like anything else in spiritual practice they can be dangerous in the hands of anyone who does not understand how to use them. Indeed, they can be dangerous in the hands of those who do understand how to use them: The path grows more treacherous the closer one gets to the goal. History records that there were lots of alchemists, but few adepts. The situation is no different today. Many a bleached bone is found only three feet from paradise.

In my own experience, I eventually reached a point where psychedelics had to be left behind—continued reliance upon them inhibited rather than furthered my development. That doesn't mean that I never ingest entheogens; it means that I no longer rely on them for my most serious work. At this phase of my journey, they usually obstruct more than they enlighten.

Megadose blasts into hyperspace are useful for two reasons: they will convince you of the reality of other worlds and, if you're lucky, they will introduce you to your essence. In time, however, you will come to realize that most shamans work with "homeopathic" doses: doses which enable them to do work in the space in which they find themselves. A fully informed ego is essential to the Work, and when you relinquish shamanic control, you leave yourself open to cosmic tricksters whose sole agenda is to hinder your spiritual growth. Don't worry—anyone who walks their path with will and intent will recognize this fork in the road if and when they come to it.

But in the beginning, psychedelics were crucial to my inner development. I often wonder where I would be now if I'd never had the revelations that these substances offered me. In my case, the *solve et coagula* formula came backwards—my first psychedelic experience,

300 micrograms of LSD, was one of complete harmonic unity—my journey began with the *coagula* portion of the equation. I know now that my essence was giving me an experience of the goal of the Work; at that time of my life I had no concept at all of what it was that I was seeking. Essence knew that once I'd experienced this state of awareness, I would never rest in this lifetime until I'd attained it permanently. (I still haven't attained it, by the way.) I quote from my book, *Psychedelic Shamanism*:

> *I began to experience what can only be described as samadhi: "the final stage in the practice of Yoga, in which individuality is given up while merging with the object of meditation." For the first, and alas, to date the only time in my life, I was "allowed" to experience the unspeakable bliss of total unity and integration. Subject and object became one—there were no questions because all that existed was a pristine "answer" in and of itself: perfectly related to everything else in seamless unity. There was no good or evil, no right or wrong, only perfection in and of itself.*

While under the influence of the entheogen, mountains were mountains and rivers were rivers, but in a way I'd never dreamed possible. When I returned to consensus reality eight hours later, mountains were no longer mountains and rivers were no longer rivers—the world from which I'd started my trip was changed forever. You can't go home again after an experience like that. It goes without saying that I had a rough time reconciling the two realities. I've never met anyone on any path who claims that it's easy. Thus begins the Great Work of Transformation.

My second acid trip showed me the solve half of the alchemical equation. It was one of the most terrifying experiences of fragmented awareness that I've ever known. My world was torn asunder, and nothing my ego could do could put it back together again. Again I quote from my book:

> *I, strange as it seems now, actually became afraid of myself! Not only afraid of myself, but afraid of everything around me—the walls, the floor, the bookcase, my hand, my shoes—everything became a total threat to "myself," of whom I was also afraid and who besides that didn't exist anyway—an appalling enough thought in its own right! Talk about double and triple binds! I was drifting in a confused sea of pure terror without any ego-structure to hold onto for reference. Only someone who has had a bad acid trip can understand what I'm trying to describe here.*

My greedy ego was seeking the total samadhi of my first LSD experience, but my essence had another lesson in mind. Mountains were definitely not mountains, and rivers were definitely not rivers; nothing, absolutely nothing in my environment was what it had been before. It was an experience of the total deconstruction of reality. At that time I had no concept at all of the alchemist's *solve et coagula* equation. Those first two acid trips could not have been more opposite in nature. Though I didn't realize it yet, I'd been given a koan to solve.

It was in trying to reconcile those two experiences that, years later, I came to understand their relationship to the alchemical secret of inner development: the solution to the koan. It was also my first inkling that essence is a very demanding teacher. To paraphrase Lao Tzu: essence is unkind—he treats the ego and its complexes like sacrificial straw dogs. (It is my

understanding that in ancient China, little dogs were woven out of straw to be ritually thrown into a fire as burnt offerings.) Essence is indeed unkind: if, once the Work has begun, the ego can't or won't keep up with him, he'll burn you up and start over. Beware! Beware! Once you make the choice, you can't not do the Work: one of my best friends tried to cop out of it and died within a year of cancer.

Essence is that portion of our awareness residing in the unconscious psyche. For me, "essence" is synonymous with Jung's concept of the "self." Your essence is the immortal portion of your awareness, quite distinct from the mortal ego, which will not last longer than this earthly incarnation. When Jim DeKorne dies, he will disappear from this planet and his life experience will be absorbed into his essence, a much larger identity in hyperspace. The attainment of this relatively simple gnosis is one of the most crucial phases of the Work because the ego has transcended the illusion that it is the center of the psyche. Suddenly, usually painfully, one knows that mountains aren't mountains and rivers aren't rivers. Not until ego and self become integrated will they reassume their identities on a much higher level of awareness. That level of integration is relatively rare during physical incarnation because it implies a transcendence to god-consciousness—we can experience it sometimes on psychedelics, but seldom do we operate from such consciousness all day every day.

I met my essence on an acid trip. It's worth quoting at length:

> *On the morning of February 18, 1979 I took LSD again after a gap of about three years. As I sat in my easy chair waiting for the effects of the drug to begin, I felt a sudden impulse to get up, go into the next room, and remove an antique Mexican machete from where it had been hanging on the wall for at least a decade. Like many items used only for decoration, this one had by now become so familiar as to be invisible —I don't recall having paid any real attention to for it for years. Indeed, it was shamefully covered with dust.*
>
> *I'd purchased this machete in 1965 at the Toluca Market outside of Mexico City. It was hanging in the back of a stall operated by a used tool and parts vendor who sold battered hammers, bent screwdrivers, grease-caked Crescent wrenches, rusty motorcycle chains—that sort of thing. The machete is obviously fairly old (I estimate early 20th Century—sometime around the Mexican Revolution), and well used, with many nicks and scratches and a splintered handle. There is a "dicho," or proverb engraved on the blade:*
>
> Nada del mundo es verdad por 10 que mi ojos ven. *In English we would translate it: "Nothing in the world is true that meets the eye," or, more freely: "Everything is an illusion." It's a curious saying: I've never thought of it as a typically Mexican Catholic sentiment—if anything, it sounds Buddhist.*
>
> *For some reason I wanted to hold this machete, and as the LSD began to alter my consciousness I held it tighter and tighter . . . it was beginning to manifest the energies of a "power object." Soon it felt like the machete was some kind of psychic lightning rod for forces to enter my body—at that point I don't think J could have let go of it if I'd wanted to.*
>
> *Now the drug was coming on strong and I was suddenly very, very stoned. The machete vibrated with authority and seemed to pull me from my chair, across the room and out the door into the yard, where I was forcibly thrown to my knees on the ground. For the first, and so far the only, time in my life I heard a distinctly clear voice speaking to me from within my own head. The voice was nothing that I could identify with as "me" or even a portion of "me." It was totally Other, and it asked a question:*

"Do you take responsibility?"

I didn't really know what that meant—take responsibility for what? Yet I knew that it was important to say yes—taking responsibility was certainly a "responsible" thing to do, and I've always believed in being responsible.

"Yes."

The energy level of the voice increased one full octave:

"Do you take responsibility!"

"Uh—sure. Yes." I was deeply intoxicated, and quite confused by the repetition of the question.

Now the numinosity and power of the voice doubled again, becoming suddenly very, very scary:

What was I dealing with here?

"Do you take responsibility!!!"

"Yes! I take responsibility!" I had no idea of what I was taking responsibility for, but I knew that I must be equal to it, whatever "it" was.

Now we crossed the line into "something else"—these goddamned acid trips! Why did I continue to do this to myself? Flashback replays of my second voyage into LSD terror . . . It was now nothing less than the voice of God demanding:

"DO YOU TAKE RESPONSIBILITY!!!!"

I was no longer sure that I wanted that much responsibility, yet somehow J felt certain that if I'd said "no," I would have dropped dead on the spot: the voice's unstated implication was: "take responsibility or die!" In that state of consciousness I really believed it.

"YES! YES! I TAKE RESPONSIBILITY!"

The voice fell silent. After a while I got to my feet and stumbled back into the house. The rest of the trip was relatively uneventful . . . By late afternoon I'd drifted back into normal awareness again —I was very glad to be back.

That night I went to bed somewhat washed-out from the acid, but fully recovered and in consensus reality again. I'd been down for several hours, in fact.

I had a dream:

My machete was in front of me, hanging suspended in a pure void of infinite darkness. Etched on the blade were Hebrew letters in living fire. I am not Jewish, and I don't know Hebrew, but I can recognize those letters and differentiate them from Sanskrit or Greek characters, for example. The machete disappeared and only the fiery letters remained suspended in the void: then they began to move and re-form themselves in the Roman alphabet to spell: SEPHIROTH, in fire. Then they disappeared and only the void was left.

I awoke, my heart pounding anxiously. (Why was I afraid?) I got up and walked around the house—what did "sephiroth" mean? I looked it up in Webster's Third New International Dictionary*—no such word. This was the most powerful dream I've ever had—a once-in-a-lifetime kind of dream. (It was a bonafide dream and not an out of body experience, which is quite different.) It was easily as numinous as my encounter with the voice, but unfortunately I didn't know what it meant any more than I knew what it was that I'd taken responsibility for. It was to be at least two weeks before I got a clue . . .*

. . . I was aimlessly browsing in a Santa Fe book store. I saw a book with a title like Dictionary of Occult and Mystical Terms*—something like that. Ah ha! Maybe here I can find out what "Sephiroth" means. I turned to the proper page: "Sephiroth: The ten*

emanations of God in the Jewish Kabbalah." I was stunned: I had heard of the Kabbalah, and knew it was some kind of Jewish mystical system, but that was as far as my knowledge went. How could my unconscious psyche come up with information that I had never consciously encountered in my life?

Needless to say, I obtained some books about the subject: I forget the reading sequence now, but Dion Fortune's The Mystical Qabalah *and Gareth Knight's* A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism *stand out in my mind as particularly seminal texts . . . It was in Knight's book, over a year later, that I encountered the final synchronicity for this experience.*

Without trying to explain the intricacies of kabbalistic philosophy, of which there are many (to say the least!), I discovered that my machete/voice adventure corresponded to the "17th path on the Tree of Life. " This path is called: "A path of choice, the crossroads of life meet here." (e.g: "Do you take responsibility?") The Tarot arcanum symbolically connected with this path is The Lovers, and the Hebrew word-letter for The Lovers is "zayin," which means "Sword. " (A machete is certainly a kind of sword). The drug ergot is also closely associated with this path, and LSD, of course, is an ergot derivative.

That's a fair amount of synchronicity compressed into an event which is still not totally clear to me, but I am apparently in good company: years after my "kabbalah trip" I found this observation concerning LSD therapy in Stanislav Grof's book, Realms of the Human Unconscious. *He is describing here how others under the influence of LSD have had experiences similar to my own.*

Individuals unfamiliar with the Kabbalah have had experiences described in the Zohar *and* Sepher Yetzirah *[two classical kabbalistic texts] and have demonstrated a surprising familiarity with kabbalistic symbols.*

I want to emphasize that I am sharing my personal experiences of the Work with you—there are as many paths as there are humans on the planet, so I'm not claiming that the kabbalah is for everyone. Although it works for me, you might find it unacceptable. That's OK—such contradictions are superficial. That's because there is a primordial *gestalten* operating within the human unconscious. Michael Hamer calls it "core shamanism,"

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Aldous Huxley, and others called it the "Perennial Philosophy." Whatever you call it, it's the foundation of every legitimate spiritual tradition in the world. We get so caught up in our own experience that we usually do not realize that the forces driving our beliefs are pretty much universal—from Buddhism to Islam to Christianity and beyond, the core symbols have their roots in the same truth. That's why there are so many legitimate paths that seem so different from the outside. Don't be fooled: when followed with shamanic will and intent they all lead to the top of the mountain.

But don't be fooled again: fighting a war to defend your God is the biggest illusion going, as well as the shortest road to hell—not every inner voice has your best interests at heart. We live in a multidimensional multiverse of competing powers. Nevertheless, as human egos incarnated in three-dimensional space, we have one power that the gods, the demons, and the angels do not have: the power of choice. It is up to us to sort out what makes sense and then live out those choices in the world.

There are three rules of thumb that I would like to leave with you. The first is that any choice that does not lead to ultimate integration and unity, leads to hell.

The second is that in making choices you must be ruthless in the service of your truth.

If the truth hurts, then for enlightenment's sake you must bear the pain. Any other option destroys the Work. You will constantly be offered choices that lead to superficial integrations that arc dead-end streets. Your essence will always tell you what to do: the secret lies in serving that advice. It's never easy to do—that's why they call it the Work.

Finally, drugs are not a substitute for doing the Work. Entheogen use outside of a disciplined, dedicated spiritual practice is recreational drug use. Re-creation, certainly, is essential to our well-being, but when it becomes escapist it insults the Work. Substance abuse of any kind is self-abuse. And although it can be extremely useful to take an occasional helicopter ride to the mountaintop (if nothing else, you'll get a bird's-eye view of where you're going and where you've been), you won't be allowed to stay there—for that you'll have to hike the perilous path up from the bottom. Though I suppose it's possible, I've never heard of anyone who attained permanent enlightenment by using psychedelics.

A few words about "shamanism." The shaman is a master of altered states of consciousness—in the classical definition, he or she travels to "other worlds" to heal the ills of the tribe. What other worlds, and how does one travel to them? Are we talking about out-of-body states here, or something else? First of all, these other worlds are literally dimensions of consciousness; they aren't "out there" someplace, they're "in here." This is almost impossible for scientifically-oriented Westerners to accept, but nevertheless it's true. One doesn't have to be a master of the classical out-of-body experience, like Robert Monroe, to travel to the shamanic realms. Anybody with a little focused intent can do it.

Jungian active imagination, kabbalistic path-working, and Hamer-method shamanic journeying are all separate names for the same basic technique. Different symbols, same experience. That's why I have trouble with some of the New Age shamans I encounter—the ones who pretend to be "Native Americans." First of all, "shamanism," in the sense I define it, is not the exclusive province of tribal peoples. It's the legacy of all humankind. Second, anyone born on this land is a Native American, and the American earth shapes our beliefs; the European, African, or Asian ancestors can no longer claim our full allegiance. But neither are most of us Aboriginal Americans and, even if we were, time moves in only one direction. The days of living in tipis with the buffalo are gone forever.

To adopt whole-cloth the mythology of aboriginal tribes is to unwittingly disrespect both them and ourselves. If I were a Sioux I would find it bitterly ironic that the newcomers who altered my ancestral homeland adopted our world-view only after its context had been destroyed. Happy myths don't sprout from reservation shacks, and past glories curse the present when we reject the challenges of our own day. Instead of ripping off Aboriginal American spirituality, it would be more useful for us to show our respect for its wisdom by becoming the true sons and daughters of this American earth. Not a nation of immigrants, but real native peoples.

That means we go inside of ourselves, into the shamanic realm, to find what is authentically our own, in this time and in this place, and bring it forth to live out in the world. If there is truth in the idea of reincarnation, then we are our ancestors both past and future. To honor "them," we must honor ourselves in the present. Part of this involves making room for the emergence of new myths. (Egos can't create myths, but they can allow them to come forth.) As Neo-Native American myth-facilitators, we are obliged to take the best of the past and apply it to the reality of the present to create something worthy of respect in the future.

Within each of us is an essence or god-self seeking to express its myth. The goal of the

Work is to create a context for our myth-making essence to manifest: we must become our essences. American myths (native, imported, and derived) are dying all around us—the people cry out for new myths to live by. Dare I say that as the ancestors of future generations we no longer have the leisure to ignore this obligation?

* * * * * *

Notes on Contributors

Ric Amante lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. His poems regularly appear in *The Cenacle*. A new collection of his poems, *Digging In*, was recently pubished by Northshire Bookstore & can be ordered at http://www.northshire.com.

Jim DeKorne lives in Hawaii. He was the founding editor / publisher of *The Entheogen Review* (1992-2008). His essay in this issue was also reprinted in Scriptor Press's Burning Man Books series (#65), *Fate Isn't What We're Up Against: An Eleventh Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics* **(**http://scriptorpress.yage.net/BM65_2009_fate.pdf**).**

G.C. Dillon lives in Plainville, Connecticut. His fiction last appeared in *Cenacle* | 69 | June 2009. It's good to have new work of his to show this time around.

Ralph Emerson lives in South Glastonbury, Connecticut. His language essays regularly appear in *The Cenacle*. Each new one draws the series nearer its conclusion, & its eventual publication as a Scriptor Press RaiBook volume.

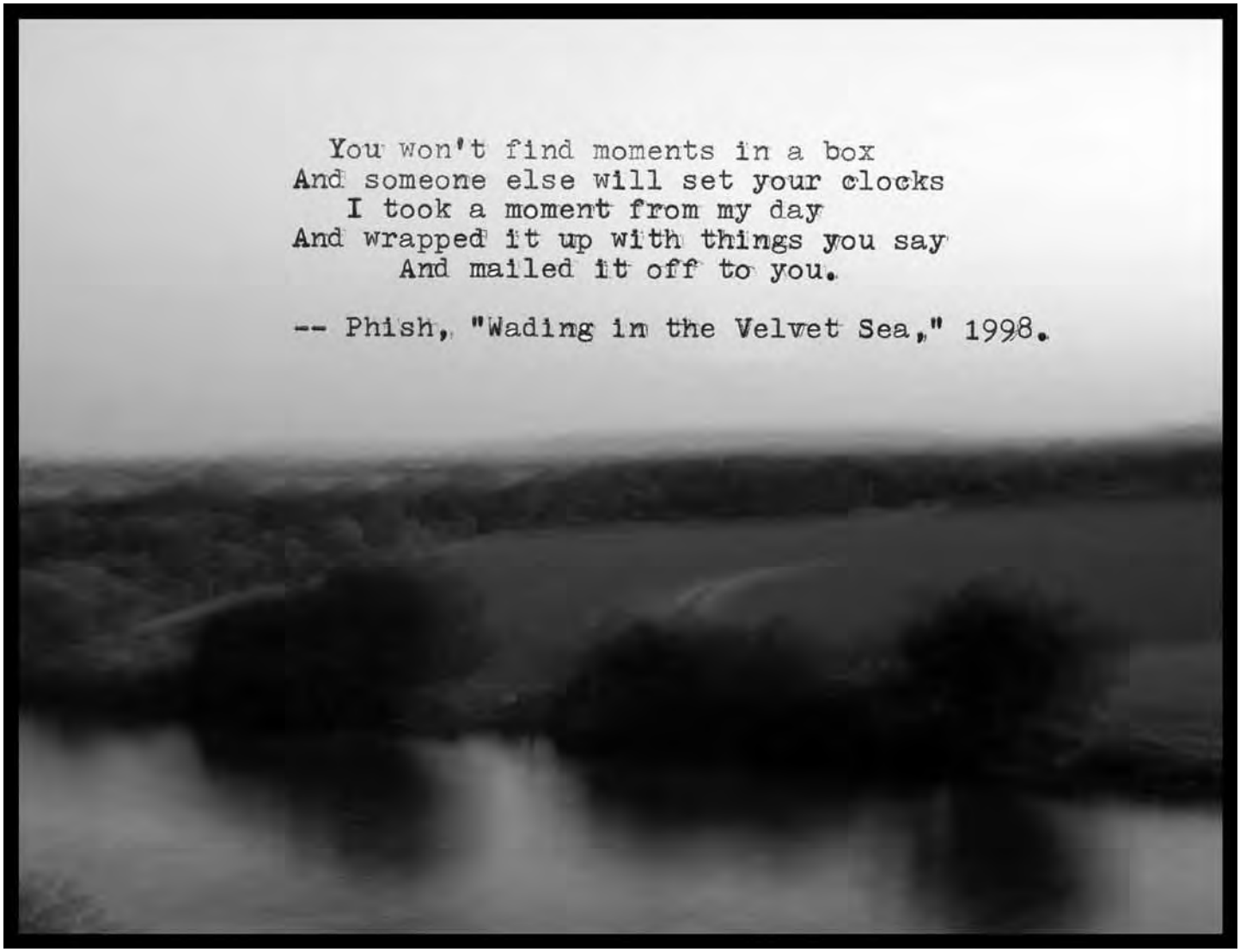
Judih Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her poetry regularly appears in *The Cenacle*, & can also be found online at http://tribes.tribe.net/poetryjams.

Alex Smith lives in British Columbia, Canada. He runs the Ecoshock environmental website (http://www.ecoshock.info/). His excellent essay on Wilhelm Reich has here finally found its way into print.

Kassandra Soulard lives in Arlington, Massachusetts. As usual, her desktop publishing & graphics skills are responsible for every good visual quality of this publication.

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Arlington, Massachusetts. It was *Cenacle* | 46 | June 2001 when last Scriptor Press was rooted in New England. Delight, somewhat unsayable, in this return.

Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor lives north of Boston, Massachusetts. Her fine poetry marks her debut in this publication.


You won't find moments in a box
And someone else will set your clocks
I took a moment from my day
And wrapped it up with things you say
And mailed it off to you.
-- Phish, "Wading in the Velvet Sea," 1998.